GUITAR WITH TABLATURE

THE ART OF KIRK HAMMETT

by Arthur Rotfeld

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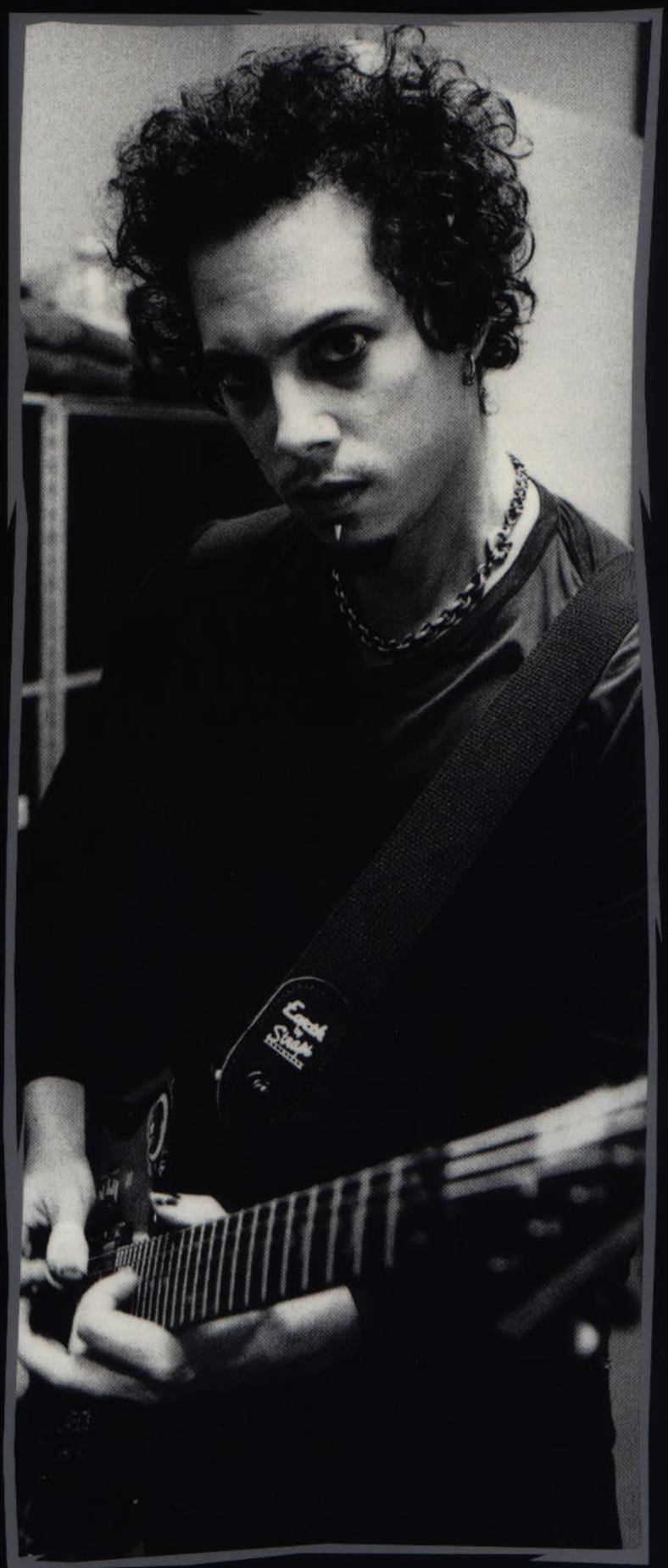

FEATURING

- More than 30 complete Metallica solos
- Classic Hammett Licks
- An Exclusive Interview
- Scale Diagrams
- Gear Setups
- Photos

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THE ART OF KIRK HAMMETT

by Arthur Rotfeld

As lead guitarist for today's quintessential heavy metal band, Kirk Hammett's distinctive solos predominate every Metallica album from 1983's *Kill 'Em All* to *Load*, released in 1996. His intense style comprises a fusion of a blues-based hard rock attitude à la Jimi Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, and Joe Perry, with classically tinged Euro-metal shadings in the vein of Uli Roth, Michael Schenker and Randy Rhoads. Throw in a touch of the modern stylings of Hammett's former teacher, Joe Satriani—two-handed tapping, whammy-bar tricks, artificial harmonics, arpeggios, and bizarre noises—and you get a sense of the foundation on which Hammett has developed his rich, incendiary style.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Hammett's work is the way he builds a solo in the context of a song. Whether he has been composing a solo at home for months, or has simply let one loose right off the cuff in the studio, he always maintains an ideal sense of form. Hammett makes his solos part of the composition of the song; they always have a genuine musical function.

A great deal can be learned about the development of melodic, rhythmic, textural and harmonic ideas by studying Hammett's solos. When you learn the solos in this book, think about the overall effect they have, and why they work within the context of the songs.

The performance notes included here will highlight the technical and theoretical aspects of the licks and solos, but you have to bring the written music to life, "out from behind the bars" on the written page. Through listening, practicing, and intense dedication, you'll be able to assimilate the technical and emotional content of Hammett's unique solos, and bring your soloing style to new, dramatic heights.

Photography by Ross Halfin

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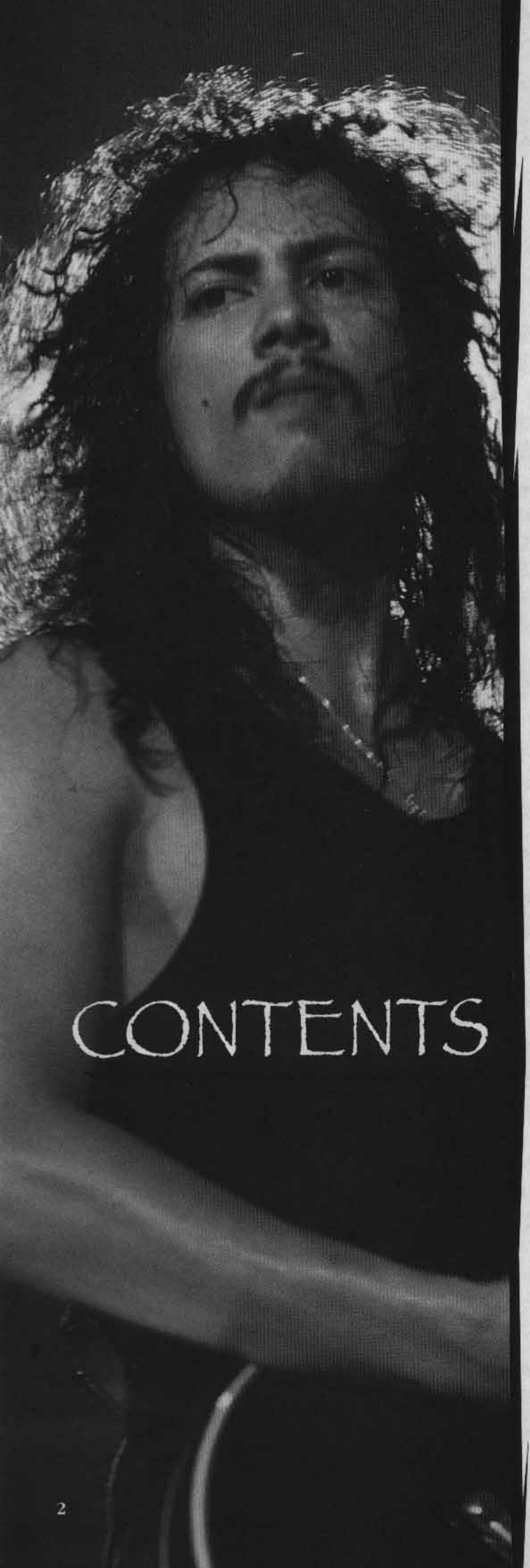

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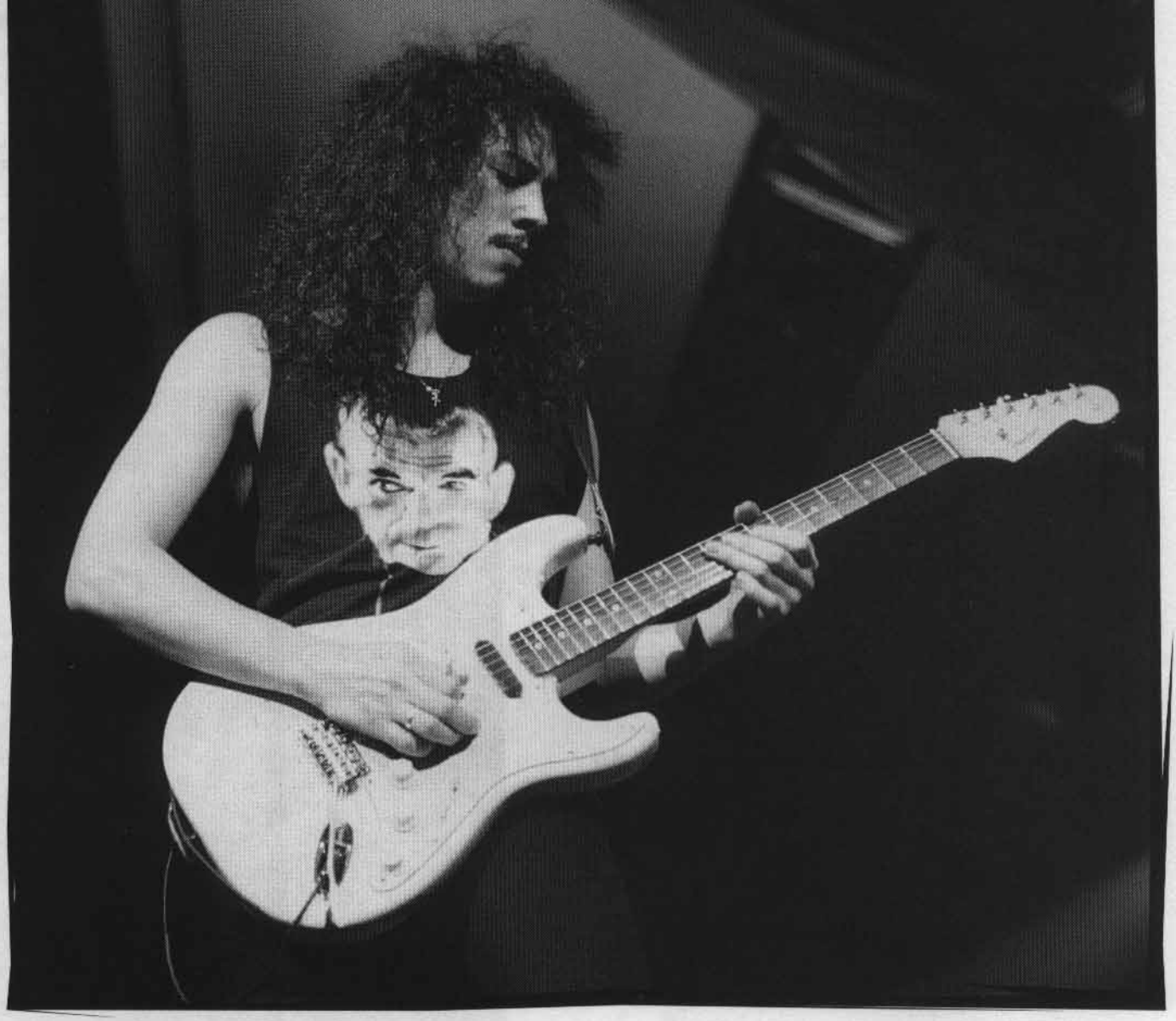


Kirk Hammett's View Of The Fingerboard

Before diving into the deluge of Kirk Hammett solos and licks, it is important to understand the guitar fingerboard in the same way he does. The diagrams here show the scales that Hammett uses most often, all presented in E. These diagrams don't show fingerings per se, but rather they show the *locations* of scale tones in the areas of the fingerboard in which Hammett most frequently plays. (The tonic, E, is shown as a square in these diagrams.) By improvising within these frameworks, or at least familiarizing yourself with them, you will develop an understanding of Hammett's approach to the guitar fingerboard.

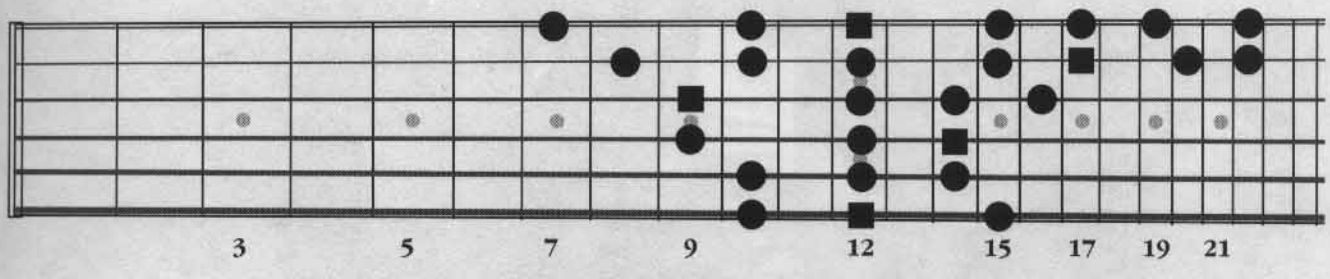
There are three scales that are commonly used by Hammett: the pentatonic minor scale, the Dorian mode, and the Aeolian mode (also known as the *natural minor* scale).

The Dorian and Aeolian modes may be heard as embellished versions of the pentatonic minor scale, in that they both include the pitches of the pentatonic minor scale with two additional notes—specifically, the 2nd and 6th degrees.

Using the formula for the major scale (1 2 3 4 5 6 7) we can devise formulas for these other scales and modes.

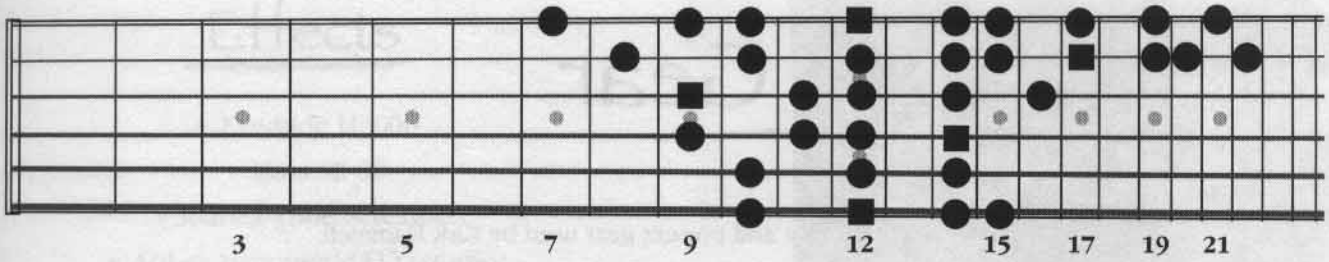
1.	**Pentatonic Minor Formula**	**1**	**♭3**	**4**	**5**	**♭7**	
	E Pentatonic Minor	**E**	**G**	**A**	**B**	**D**	

This neck diagram shows Hammett's preferred locations of E pentatonic minor:



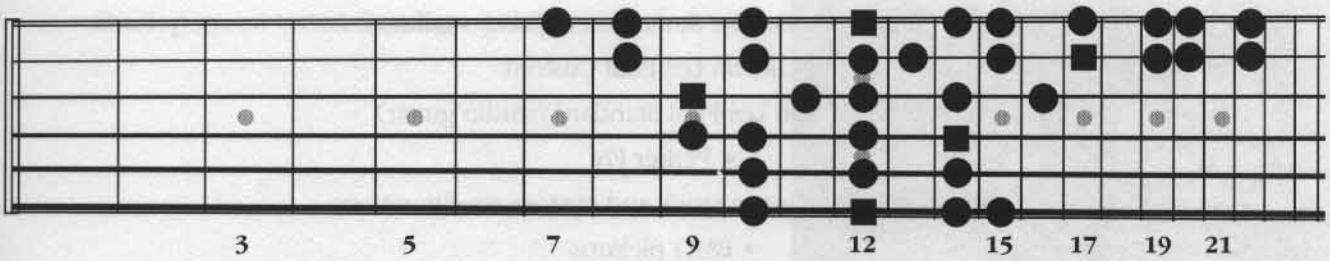
2.	**Dorian Formula**	**1**	**2**	**♭3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**♭7**
	E Dorian	**E**	**F♯**	**G**	**A**	**B**	**C♯**	**D**

This neck diagram shows Hammett's preferred locations of E Dorian:



3.	**Aeolian Formula**	**1**	**2**	**♭3**	**4**	**5**	**♭6**	**♭7**
	E Aeolian	**E**	**F♯**	**G**	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**

This neck diagram shows Hammett's preferred locations of E Aeolian:



Gear

This listing includes past and present gear used by Kirk Hammett.

Guitars

- Custom ESP ("Skully")
- Jackson Randy Rhoads Custom (tuned down a whole step)
- 1958 Gibson Flying V (studio guitar)
- ESP Flying V, a replica of his Gibson (studio guitar)
- Tom Anderson guitar (studio guitar)
- Early 1960s Fender Stratocasters (studio guitars)
- Gibson Les Paul Custom
- 1958 Gibson Les Paul Standard (studio guitar)
- Parker Fly
- Other ESP guitars in stock and custom configurations
- EMG pickups

Amps

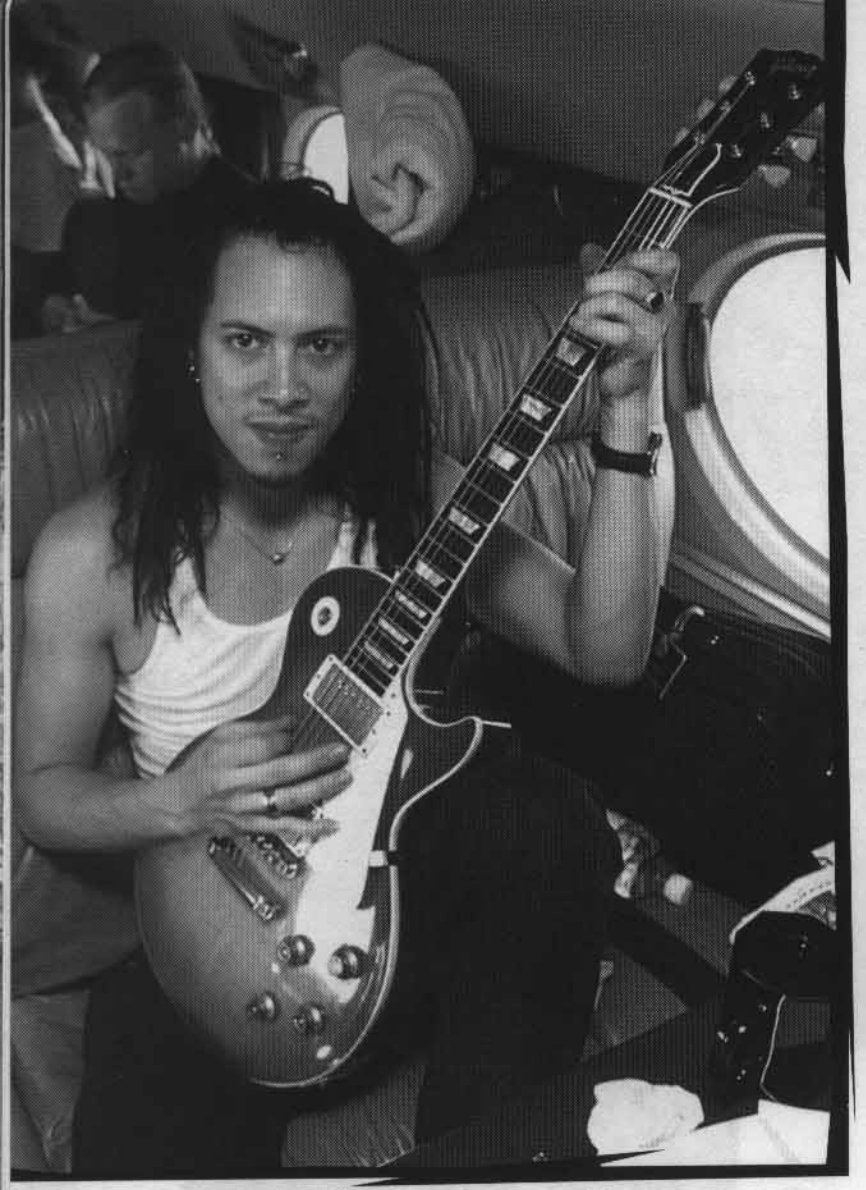
- Bradshaw preamp
- VHT power amp
- Boogie Mark IV head (studio)
- ADA MP-1 preamp (studio)
- ADA EQ (studio)
- Vintage Marshall head (studio)
- Mesa/Boogie Strategy 400 power amp
- Mesa/Boogie 4x12 cabinets (studio)
- Marshall 4x12 cabinets with 25-watt speakers
- Matchless Spitfire
- Vox AC-30
- Fender tweed combos

Effects

- Eventide H3000
- Boss SE-50
- Ibanez Tube Screamer
- Aphex parametric EQ (studio)
- Vintage effects pedals (Electro-Harmonix, MXR, etc.)

Strings and Picks

- Dean Markley .010–.046
- Dunlop green tortex (medium heavy)



Kirk Speaks!

In this exclusive interview, conducted by John Stix for Cherry Lane Music, Kirk Hammett discusses his soloing approaches, influences, applications of music theory, studio and onstage experiences, and much more.

Was* Kill 'Em All *your first time in the studio?

No, Exodus (the band I was in before Metallica) did a demo. We had something like three or four hours and we banged out something really quickly. I couldn't really call that studio experience.

So* Kill 'Em All *was your first real studio experience?

Yeah, and I was very intimidated. I felt very stiff and I didn't feel like I could really totally relax. I felt that every take had to be *the* take. I didn't know enough about being in a studio at all. I didn't know that you can comp solos together [assembling a solo from various takes spliced together]. I wasn't really comfortable with over-dubs at all. We were all inexperienced. It was pretty much learning as we went along.

Were the other guys supportive of you, or did you feel pressure from them?

We all pressured each other, but we were all supportive of each other at the same time, which is like it still is today. Nothing has really changed, at least now we have the time to breath a bit. But you have to understand, we only had three or four weeks to do that album.

Yeah, but didn't you play all of those songs as a live band?

Well, I'd been in the band for about three weeks.

Oh wow, you were* really *fresh.

Yeah, and I was pretty much drawing on my entire inventory. I kind of fit every other lick I could on that album, 'cause there's a lot of guitar solos on that album.

Did you actually copy any of* [original Metallica guitarist] *Dave Mustaine's solos from the demos for the album versions?

I was told, just for the sake of keeping consistent with the demo, to start out each solo the same way he started out his solos, and then go from there. As a whole, I think 90% of the guitar solos on there were all *my* licks. But there are a couple of solos on there that were 100% me as well. [The experience] was a lot of fun for me. It was a big challenge for me. I was really keen on establishing my style.

Do you think you established it by that album?

No, not at all. Only because we had to do it [so quickly]. We really didn't have time to ponder or intellectualize. It was just, "Guitar solo's done, on to the next one."

***What was the difference in your approach to* Ride The Lighting?**

Well, the one big difference is that we had all new material and I could start from square one and just build the solos up. And by that time we had been playing together for over a year and I felt very comfortable. I knew the guys a little bit better and I knew how they thought, musically.

At what point were you taking lessons from Joe Satriani?

I started taking lessons from Satriani in 1982, right before *Kill Em All*. I had taken maybe ten lessons from him. I learned about modes, chord theory, scale theory, and a lot of licks. We would play together and he'd play a lick and I'd totally cop it. I wouldn't tell him, I'd just go home, break out my guitar and work out this lick I'd seen him play.

***So are there any Satriani licks on* Kill 'Em All?**

Ahhhhh! Here and there, but I would always change them in a subtle way.

Were you able to use the theory that you had acquired on Metallica albums?

Oh yes, definitely. I would sit down and map out what scales could be used, or what would be appropriate over certain chords, map out certain arpeggios and such.

You use the pentatonic minor, the Dorian mode, and the natural minor scale most frequently. Is that because they feel the best?

Yeah, they just feel the best to me. It just a lot has to do with the fact that even before I knew how to play modes I was playing those scales just kind of naturally, just from what I was learning from albums.

Were you a box [the common pentatonic minor scale fingering] player?

Yeah, at the very beginning I was, then I went into playing modes, but now I'm back into that box. It feels comfortable, and I like the sound.

***Do you feel that you had established your own style by the time you recorded* Ride The Lightning?**

I thought that I had a particular sound that was fairly consistent. A lot of people started to tell me that by . . . *And Justice For All* they can hear *me* when I play the guitar solo. They knew how I thought, musically, so far as phrasing was concerned and certain licks, the double stops that I was into . . .

Where did those come from?

[Michael] Schenker. The whole phrasing thing came from Schenker. I learned a lot about phrasing from him, and the sense of melody that I had came from him. I always wanted to play really fast and then put in something really melodic and catchy. I always tried, from the very beginning, to play catchy guitar solos. You know, bits and pieces that you can single out and hum, something that would just stick in your mind, rather than just a flurry of notes.

Did you work on the solos before the recording sessions?

Incessantly. I'm very obsessive about it.

On all the records?

On all the records. I would make constant notes. I put tons of guitar solos on an 8-track machine in my room based on ideas from my notes. Then I'd take out bits and pieces here and there and comp a solo; that way I'd have a rough take to work with—something I was satisfied with—and then I'd work on that. It was basically a process of elimination. And then there were times when I worked on something to death and brought it to the studio and canned it because it sounded so stiff, and just ended up improvising on the spot, and it worked out better than all those hours and hours. With me, there's just not one right way. Sometimes I've found that it's just better to follow your gut instinct.

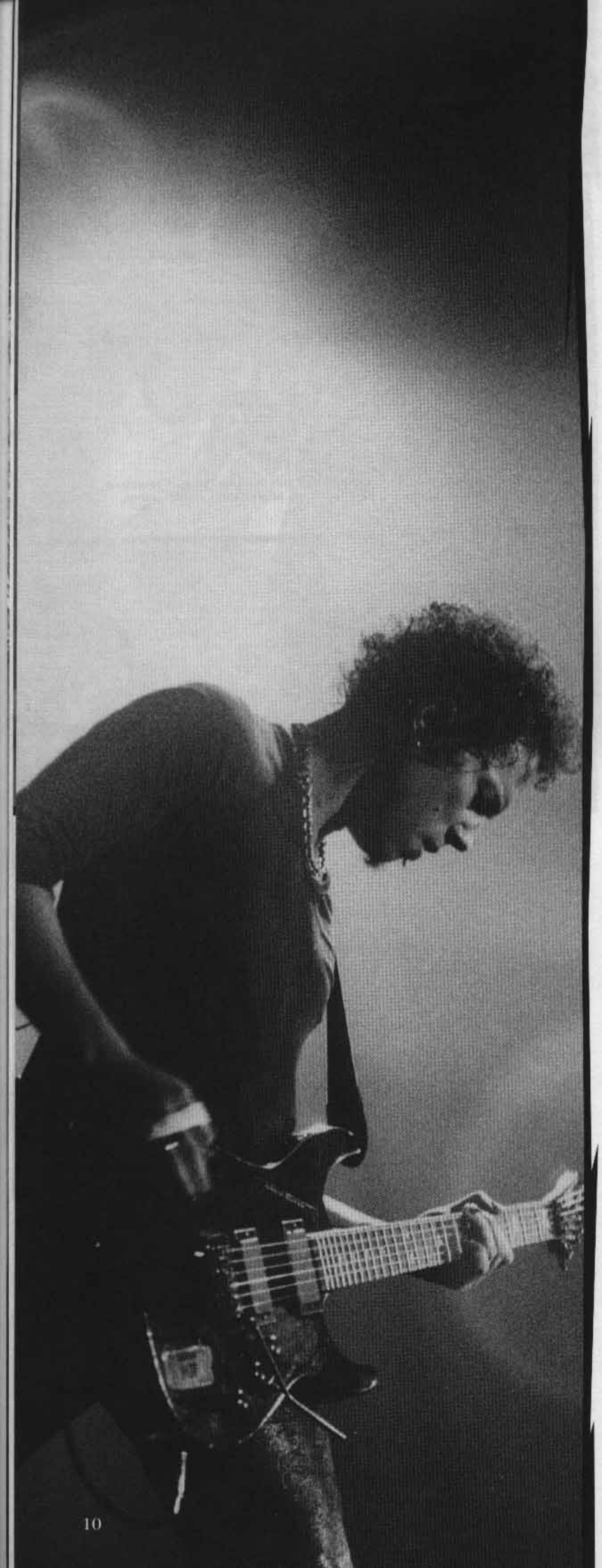
But before you arrive at that point you have already studied and planned how to approach the solo?

Yeah. It's more of like "I know where it should be going but it's not quite there." A lot of it has to do with the fact that I'm playing with work tapes that are pretty shittily recorded, recorded in the garage. Then when you get into the studio you hear the big drum sound and the big guitar sound and everything else sounds a lot cleaner—sometimes that's much more inspirational. When I couldn't lock into the track from the pre-production tapes, a lot of the times that was because it wasn't as good sounding as it [would eventually] sound in the studio.

So the sound and groove could inspire you just as much as the chord progression.

Oh yes, absolutely.

Clockwise, from top left: Cliff Burton, James Hetfield, Kirk, and Lars Ulrich, in Metallica's early years.



In a song like "Battery," for example, when you play a whole tone scale, did you sit down and say, "OK, there is a spot for a whole tone scale."?

Well, its never been "OK. Whole tone scale here." It's more of just jamming on it and coming up with a cool lick that just happened to be a whole tone scale lick. It's more of that sort of thing. For that particular solo it was.

***What was your change of approach for the solo work on* Master Of Puppets?**

For *Master Of Puppets* I did a lot more improvising in the studio. I remember having a lot of trouble coming up with a guitar sound that I felt comfortable with. By then I was a lot more settled into the whole modal thing. I felt a lot more comfortable with it, and the music had grown that much more. I felt that it was really important for me to put something down on tape that showed my growth with the band. I played a lot more melodically on that particular record.

You might say that* Master Of Puppets *is where your identity is clearly presented and apparent.

Yeah, definitely. I mean that had a lot to do with the fact that I was a lot more comfortable with my technique and I wasn't scrutinizing every aspect of my playing and I wasn't saying, "Now I'm playing in Phrygian." The solos just came a lot more naturally to me.

Well, that's interesting because also during that time, Lars and James are scrutinizing every drum beat, every second, every moment, every breath. . . .

Yeah. There was a bit of that. But I mean from a playing point of view, from me sitting down and playing, I was a lot more comfortable using certain scales, and that hadn't been [the case] in the past. And I used a lot more arpeggios as well.

Were you ever challenged by your band mates? Did they ever say, "What the hell? What kind of scale is that? What are you doing?"

Oh yeah, all the time. A lot of the time a scale would put a certain mood across, just because of the nature of the scale relating to the chords, and they would say, "What are you doing?" and I'd have to explain it to them—which is something that started happening more the further we got along—but they understood where I was coming from after a while. That happened with the solo on "Hero Of The Day." James said, "What are you doing?!" and I said, *"This* is what I'm doing," and he said, "It sounds out-of-key," and I said, "There's no way it can be out-of-key. The reason why it probably doesn't sound right to you is because it is so different—it's such a different sound," and after going back and forth for about two or three hours all of a sudden he liked it, and I said "Why all of a sudden the change of heart?" and he said, "Well, it sounds like something

that Thin Lizzy might do." All of a sudden he understood it, and I just said "Hmm . . . *OK*. . . ."

***Did any new sounds or influences come in to help you get to where you wanted to go for . . .* And Justice For All?**
It was the height of that whole solo guitar player thing. Joe Satriani was very successful at that point, so was Steve Vai, so was Yngwie. You had me, and your Tony McAlpines . . .

So you felt that competitive edge?
Yeah. I felt very competitive and I felt that I really had to show off my technique and what I could do. I think I overplayed a bit and I think in my quest to overplay it kind of came out sterile and I actually made a few mistakes harmonically on that album. I just got so caught up in trying to prove my virtuosity or whatever. I think I kind of made a concession and I played a lot less melodically. It turned out disjointed, a lot of it. I listen to it now and I think, "Wow . . . if I played that now it would sound a hundred times better."

When you perform songs from that album now do you make any changes?
Totally. Yeah, we play "The Shortest Straw" in the set now and I play a totally different guitar solo, only because, again, my sensibility and my taste have changed since then.

What were some of the ideas behind the solos on the "Black Album"?
Well, I started playing more bluesy and I wasn't so worried about showing off and being so technical and showing the world that I know 15,000 different ways to play behind an E chord. I played more for the song rather than just as a solo spot. It kind of laid the groundwork for the solos on this album *[Load]*. That's when I started singing guitar solos out rather than just fumbling around on my guitar trying to find something. Like the whole rhythmic sort of idea, and a lot of melodic ideas that I was telling you about earlier, that's when I started doing that, on the "Black Album." Like I said, it was a lot bluesier. The Hendrix/Page thing started coming a little bit more and the bluesiness started coming through a little bit more—not as much as on this album, but like I said, that was the groundwork for it. Plus, I got a really great guitar sound and that made all the difference in the world.

I think that you once told me that that was the first time you really liked your guitar sound on a record. Is that correct?
Yeah, and we didn't even go through a whole lot of pain finding it. It was very warm sounding. A lot of that had to do with Bob Rock. He had a way of coaching me through, 'cause we were influenced by the same things. For "The Unforgiven"—a lot of this is fairly well documented—I was playing something, and he said, "You're totally off. You're not hitting it . . . think about something that Beck would play on *Truth,* or something Page would play on the first Zeppelin album," and I said "Alright, let's try that," and we actually got this sound that was very similar to Page's sound on *[Led] Zeppelin I,* even with the slap-back echo. I think we had an Echoplex hooked up, you know, one of those tape echoes. I'd play something and he'd like it and say, "That's good, but think Billy Gibbons around the time of *Tejas,"* or something like that.

***Did you do any of that for* Load?**
Oh yeah, but the key word this time was Buddy Guy or John Coltrane. He definitely knew what to say to get the best out of me.

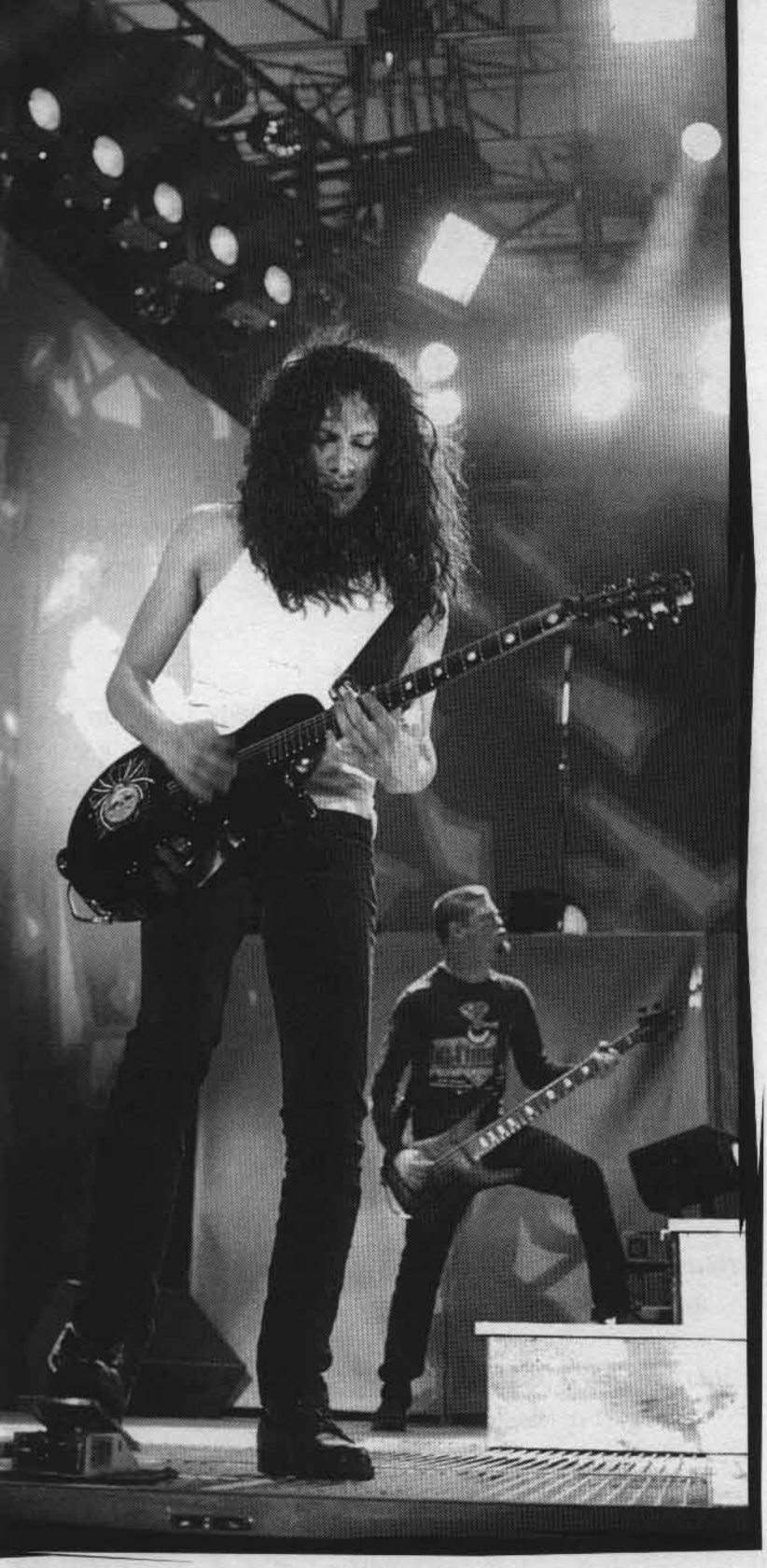
Which song is a "Coltrane" song?
Ahhhh! Well, the Stevie Ray Vaughan, Buddy Guy, sort of Coltrane thing would be "Poor Twisted Me." He [Bob Rock] said, "You know how John Coltrane leaned into every note and played slightly behind the beat, just like Buddy Guy does, Stevie Ray Vaughan does? That's what you gotta do on this solo." I went through eight or nine passes and I started warming up to it, and then an hour into it Bob said, "Your on fire man! Let's record," and that's basically how we got the solo. One interesting thing about "Poor Twisted Me"—I don't know how this happened—is [that] I didn't know there was a guitar solo on that song [laughs], or actually I *did* but I totally forgot, so I never really did the homework on it. So what's on the album is totally just made up on the spot . . . improvised on the spot.

That's also a very clean solo.
Yeah, it is.

Did that take a little more guts to do?
No, because I've been playing that way for the last two or three years. Using cleaner sounds just on my own, practicing at my house . . . so it felt totally natural. Though no one knew about that because I've never played that way before on tape.

It seems to me that even after all the study of theory, you go back to Schenker, Johnny Winter, Jimmy Page. Does it come full circle?
It totally has. My attitude is that it's better to know it and choose not to use it, rather than feel the need to use it and not be able to. You know what I am saying? It's better to have the knowledge than not.

You can still apply the knowledge because even for* Load *you still prepared the same way you always prepared?
Yeah, pretty much. But this time a lot of it was on Pro Tools [a digital recording/editing computer program], and I had my



studio in the basement, and I did countless [hours of] guitar production work. I would literally get up every day, go down to my studio and work on Metallica music for months and months on end, coming up with different sounds, comping solos together, coming up with different combinations of sounds or ideas. Really just exploring, and using the technique that MIDI offers nowadays.

Which is really like editing any way you want.

Yeah, just fully taking advantage of the cutting edge technology.

Where do you feel the best of Kirk Hammett comes out, in the studio or in a performance?

You know—and I've said this before—the best of my playing comes out when I'm in a hotel room at four o'clock in the morning [laughs]. I swear to God. I feel good about 90% of what we have done in the studio—or I wouldn't put it out. But in the studio I always felt that by the time it got around to doing my part, I was in pretty good form, my chops were up. I know that there are certain points on tour when my chops are really, really focused and honed in. I'm looking forward to doing this next album. We are going to tour till May [1997] and go into the studio in July. It will give me an opportunity to use those chops that I've acquired after touring so much. For me, I go out on stage and I play for two and a half hours and then I go back to my hotel room and play for another three. I do this day in and day out—and sometimes, when I have a day off, I play for seven or eight hours. There really isn't anything else for me to do, except to have a drink. . . .

When you play in your hotel room, are you playing solos over records? What's the regime?

I plug into a Zoom, plug into Pignose, and play along with whatever type of music I'm listening to at the time. If I get an idea for a piece of music it instantly goes on tape. A lot of my playing in my hotel room is learning different stuff.

Do you have to be careful because you play in E minor so often? Do you feel like "Well, I've already treaded water in this area"?

Oh yeah, totally. It is always a constant battle not to repeat yourself, but you just know when a certain lick sounds good at a certain moment, over a certain progression and you just have to go for it. Musicians will always be the first to spot that, but a large part of our listening audience are non-musicians and so you *kind of* get away with it [laughs] .

What are some of your proudest moments?

Well, I really like playing both guitar solos in "Wherever I May Roam," I *really* think that's a special moment, from my perspective. Also, I think the guitar solo in "Bleeding Me" is really great; it sums up all of my influences, with a good dose of my own style. I'm sweeping my whole lick catalog there—playing licks that I would have played on *Kill 'Em All,* new licks, and certain phrases that are very Hendrix-y. I like how it turned out.

Note: More of Hammett's thoughts and comments—on particular solos—can be found throughout the book, just before the applicable solo's performance notes.

THE SIGNATURE LICKS OF KIRK HAMMETT

The licks in this section form the foundation of Kirk Hammett's style. These licks, or at least a variation of them, may be found in nearly all Metallica solos. Learning them will not only give you an understanding of the basic building blocks of Hammett's solos, but of rock guitar soloing in general.

(Note: These licks are drawn from solos that are not covered in the remainder of the book.)

CLASSIC ROCK PULL-OFF LICKS

These solo excerpts are Kirk Hammett's versions of classic rock licks that incorporate pull-offs. The basis for these licks have quite a past—nothing against Hammett; all the greats build on tradition, and he is no exception. Hammett probably heard early incarnations of these licks in the solos of Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, and Jimi Hendrix. Be sure to think about the differences and similarities between these licks; they are essentially variations on a basic theme.

"The Four Horsemen"

from *Kill 'Em All*

Words and Music by
James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Dave Mustaine

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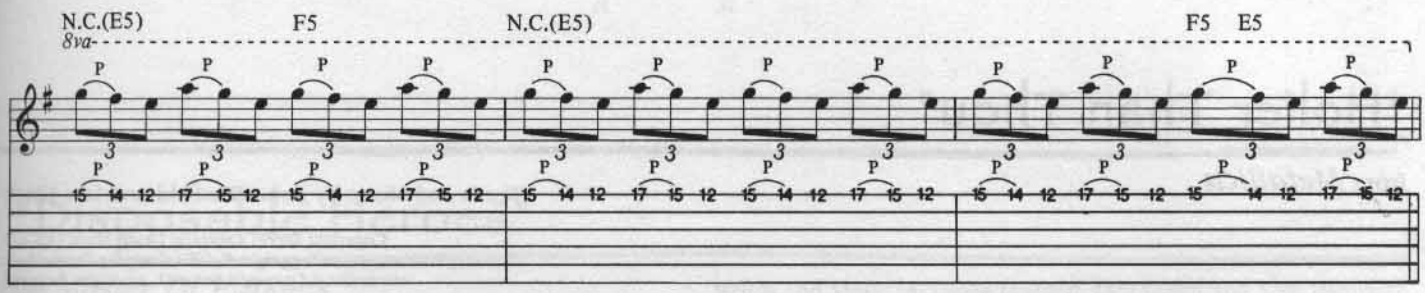

"Battery"

from *Master Of Puppets*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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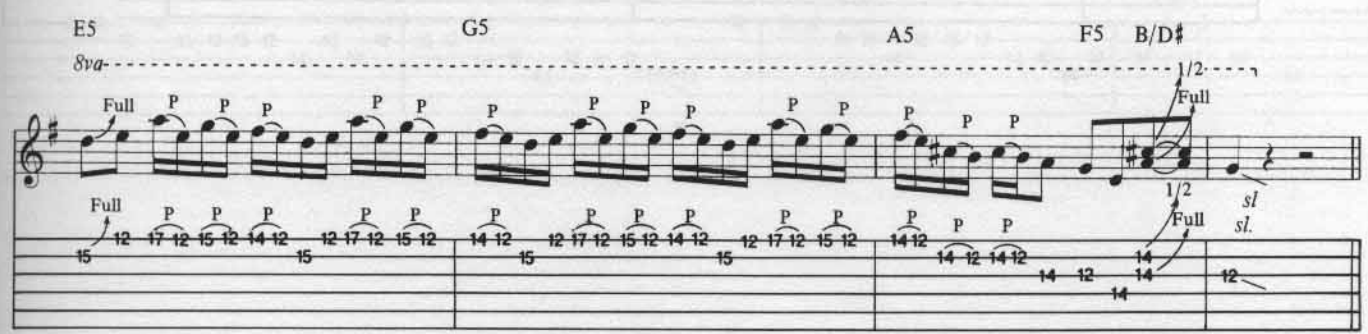
2:05



"The Frayed Ends Of Sanity"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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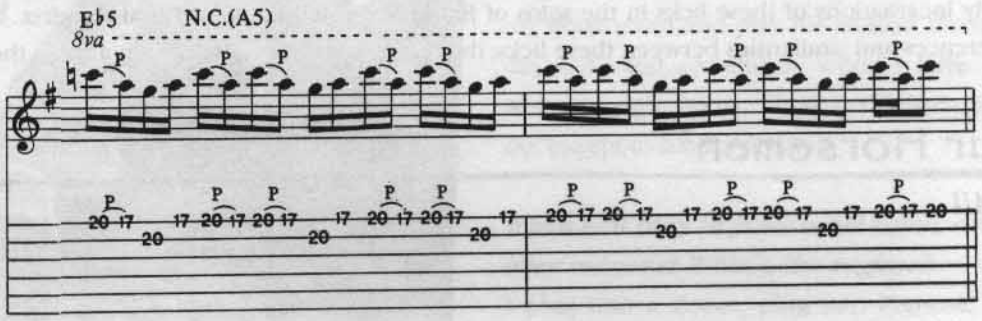
5:00



"Holier Than Thou"

from *Metallica*

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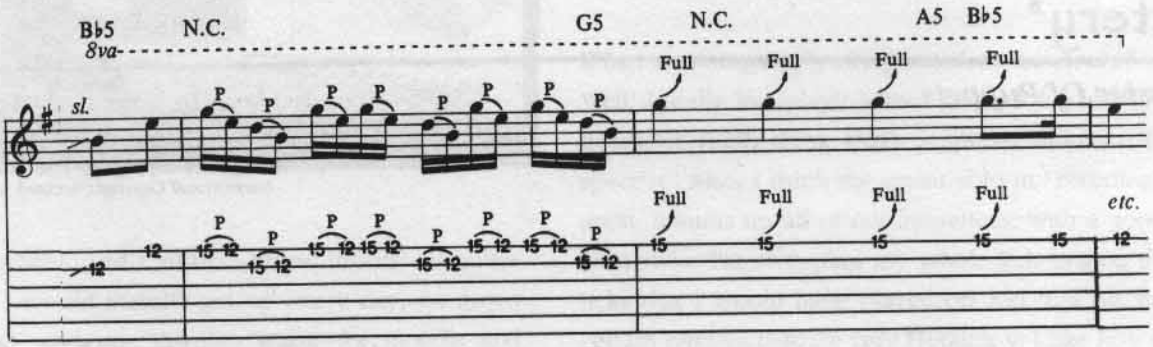

BLUES LICKS

These are Hammett's blues-oriented licks, and many can probably be traced back, in some form, to the blues musicians of 1940s and 50s. Even when Hammett is faithful to the original, he still maintains his own heavy and intense identity—always "Kirk." Remember that even if the basis of the lick was once Albert King's, Buddy Guy's or B.B. King's, these licks are rejuvenated by each subsequent generation's guitarists, because through each player's unique voice they become his own. Hammett's scale choices in these licks include the pentatonic minor (1 ♭3 4 5 ♭7), the blues scale (1 ♭3 4 ♭5 ♮5 ♭7), and the Dorian mode(1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 ♭7). Hammett loves the Dorian mode; nearly all of his double-stop licks are based on this mode.

"Motorbreath"

from *Kill 'Em All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield

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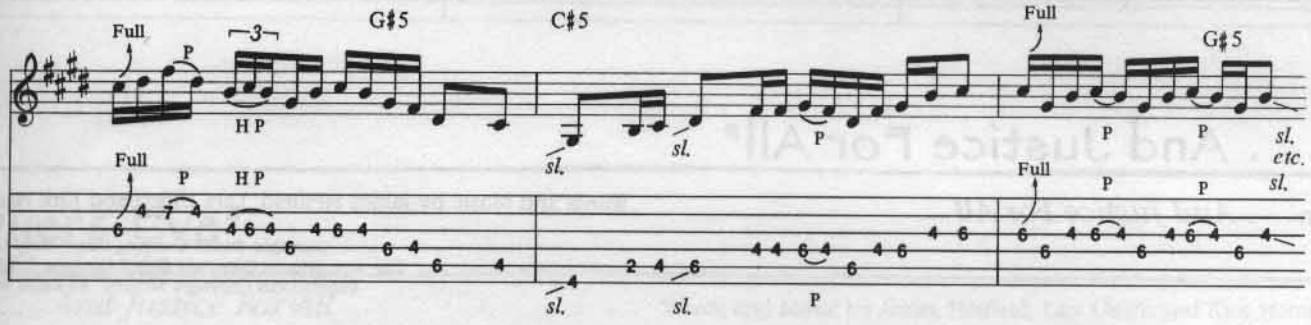
2:27



"Disposable Heroes"

from *Master Of Puppets*

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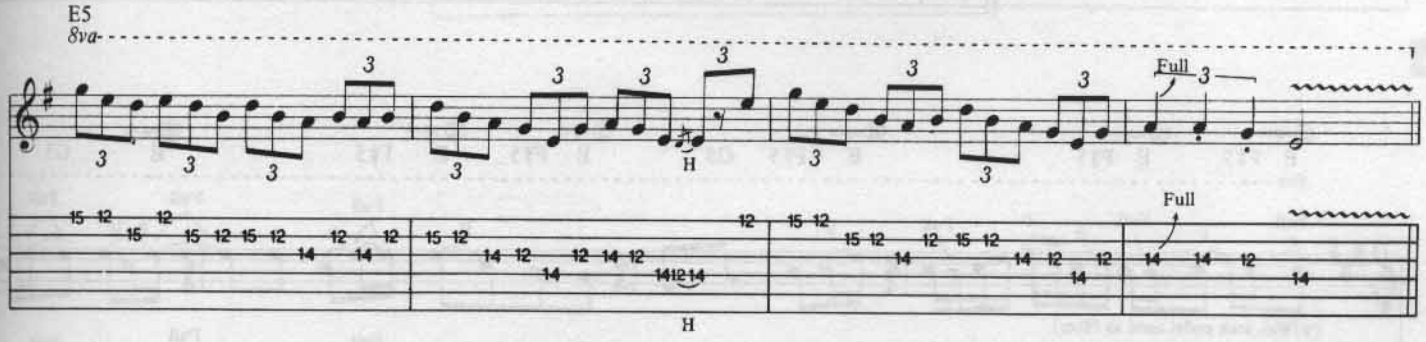

"Leper Messiah"

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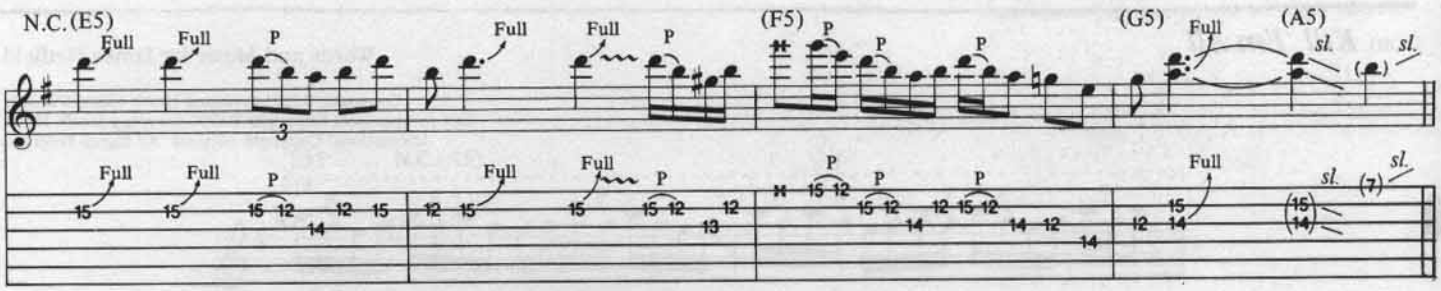
4:08



". . . And Justice For All"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

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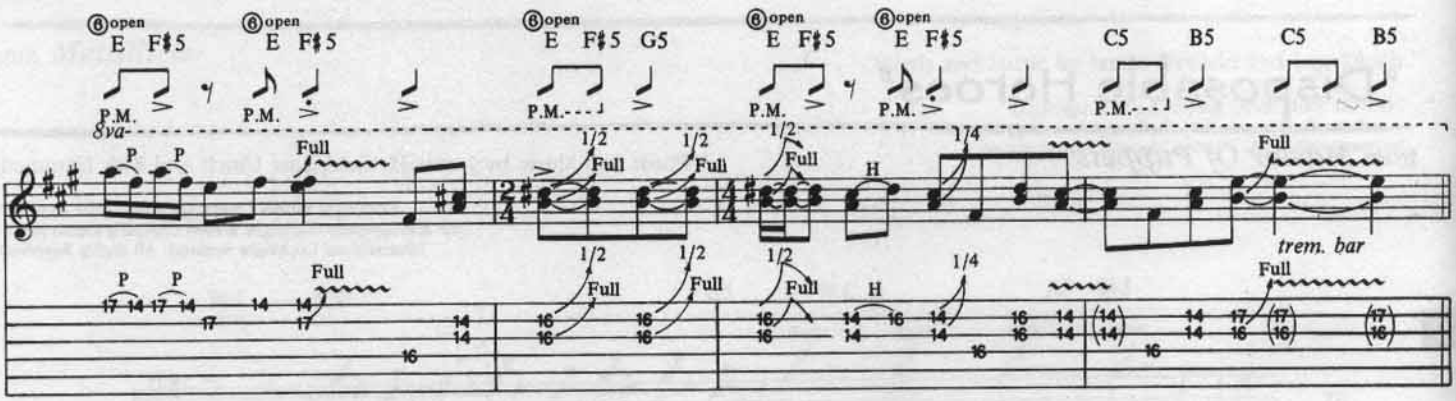

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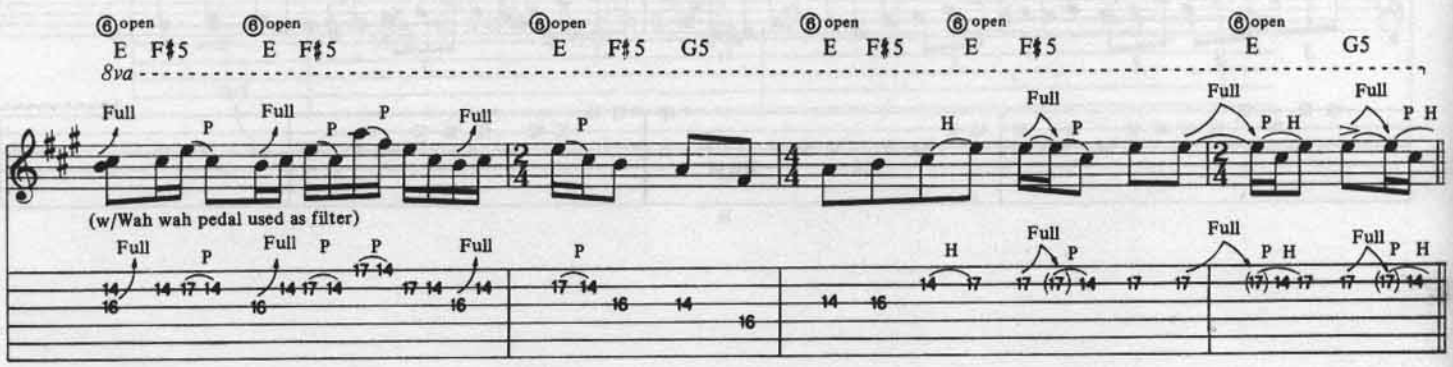

"The Frayed Ends Of Sanity"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

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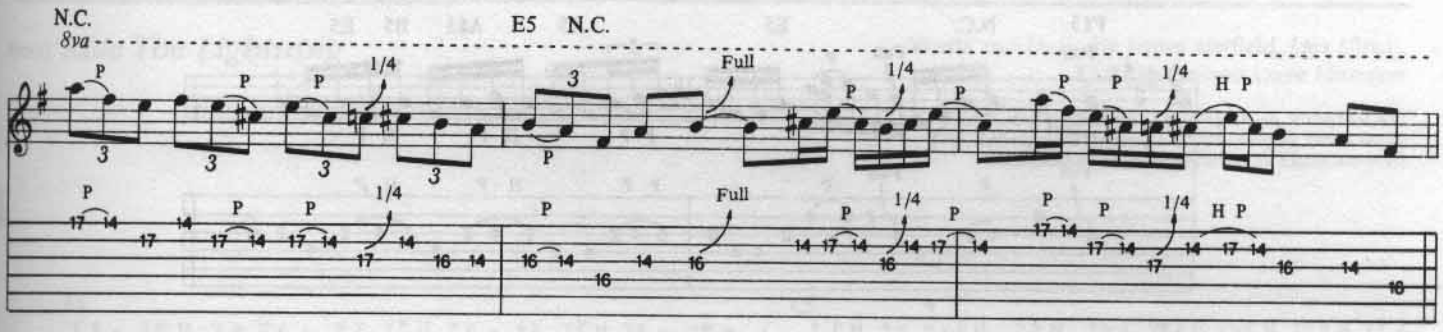

"Dyers Eve"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

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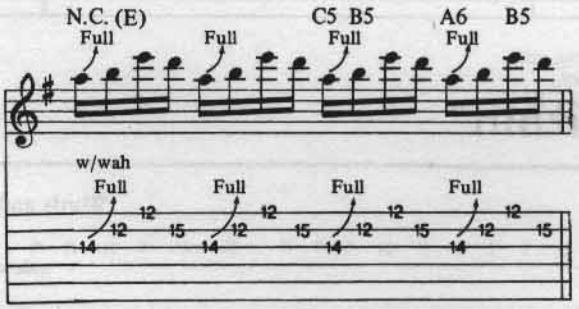

"My Friend Of Misery"

from *Metallica*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Jason Newsted

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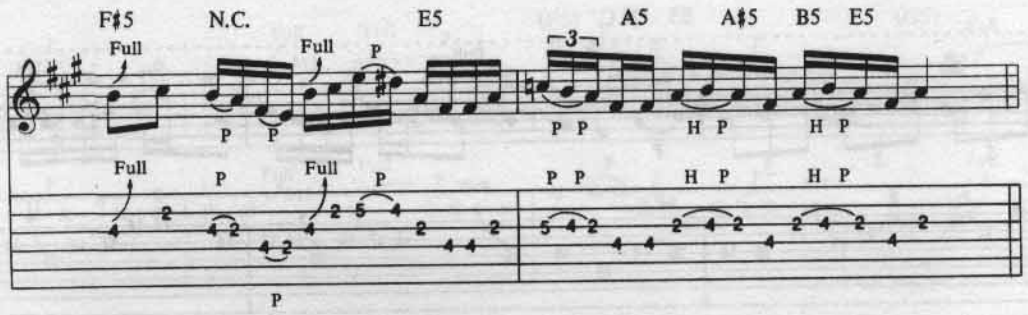
5:41



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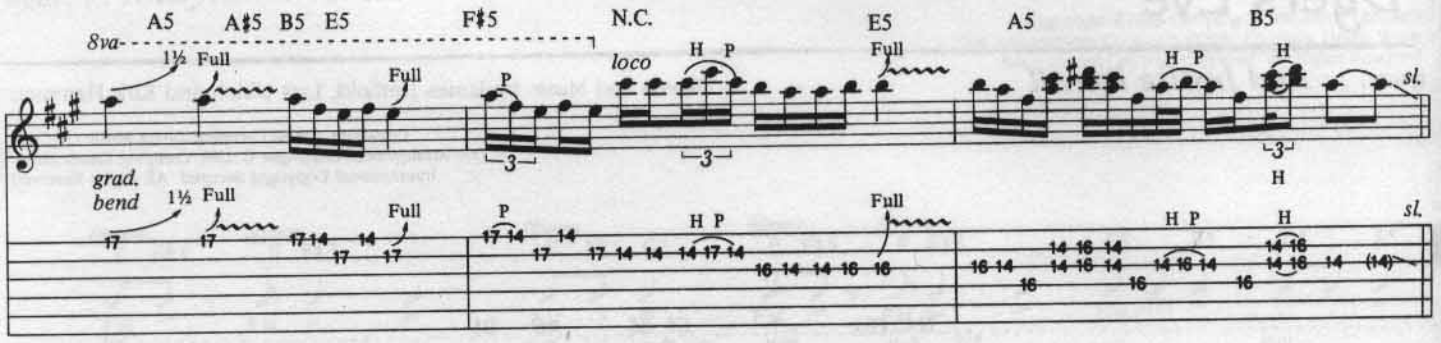

"The Struggle Within"

from *Metallica*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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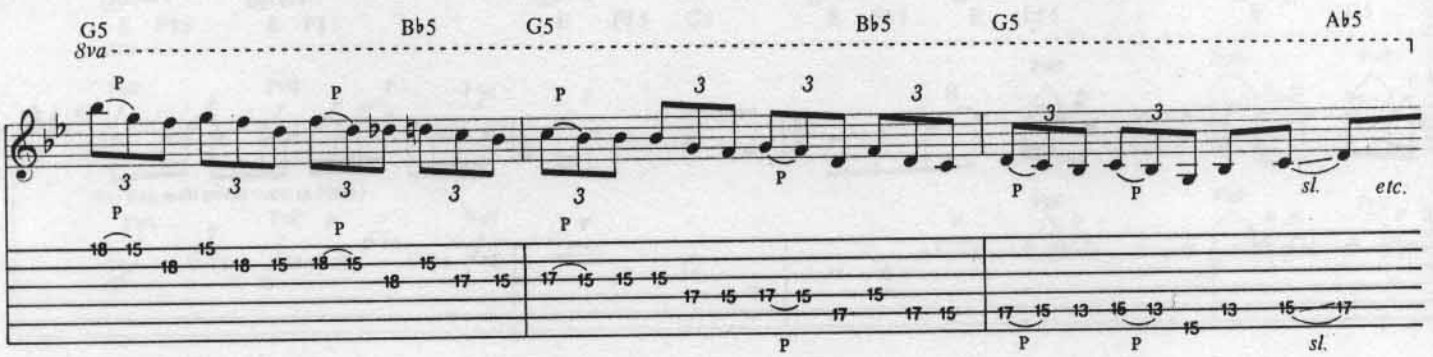
2:47



HEAVY METAL LICKS

These licks are more indicative of Hammett's own musical temperament. Idiomatic for heavy metal guitar, they contain instantly recognizable, trademark Hammett-isms: two-handed tapping, crazed pull-off figures, and classical étude-style patterns that have gone awry.

"Ride The Lightning"

from *Ride The Lightning*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich, Cliff Burton and Dave Mustaine

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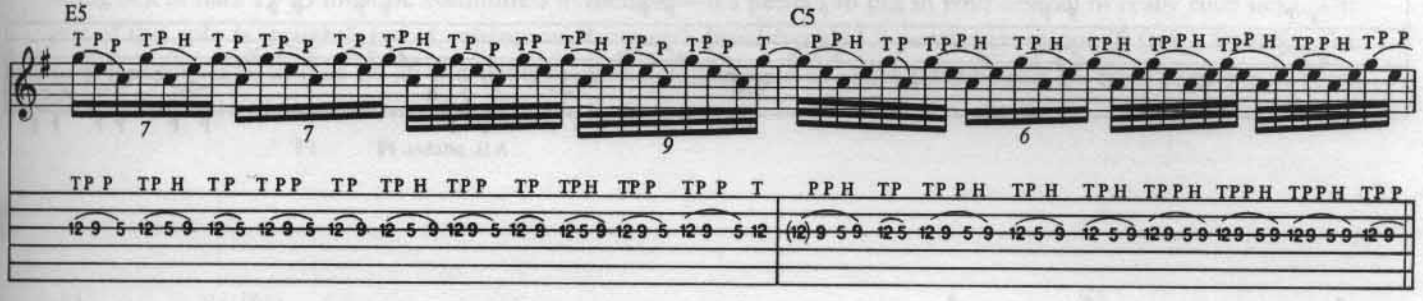

"Dyers Eve"

from ...*And Justice For All*

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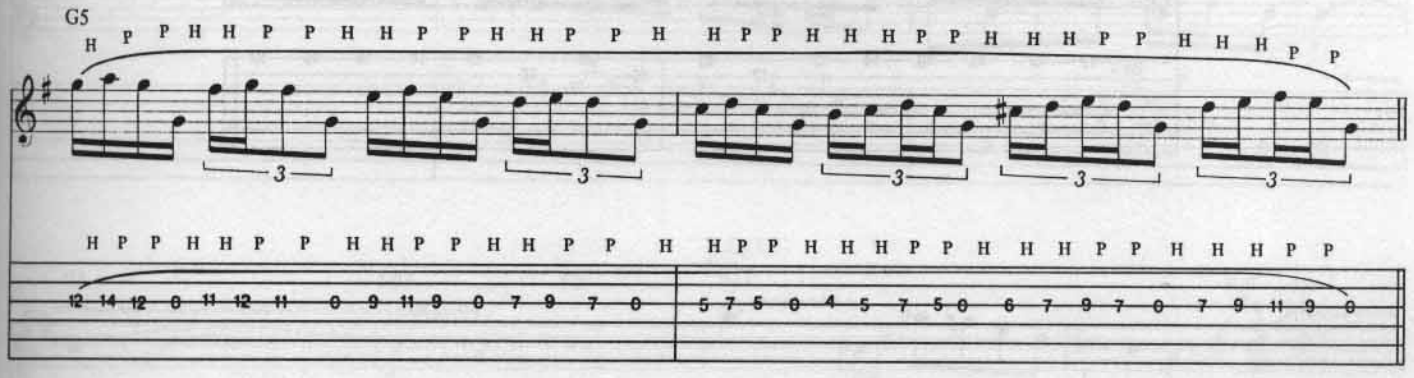
4:21



"Of Wolf And Man"

from *Metallica*

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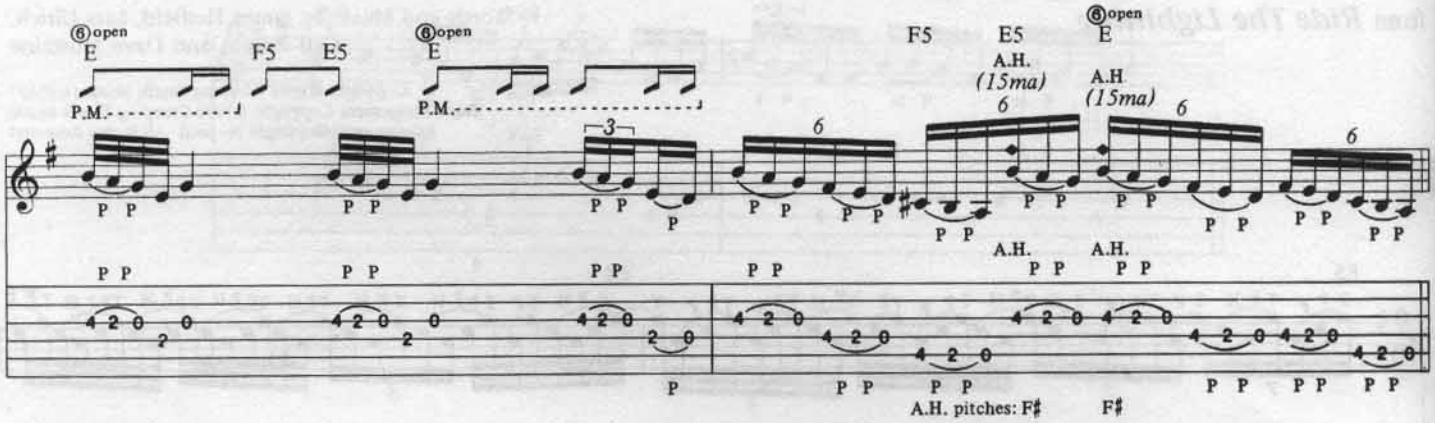
2:24



"The Struggle Within"

from *Metallica*

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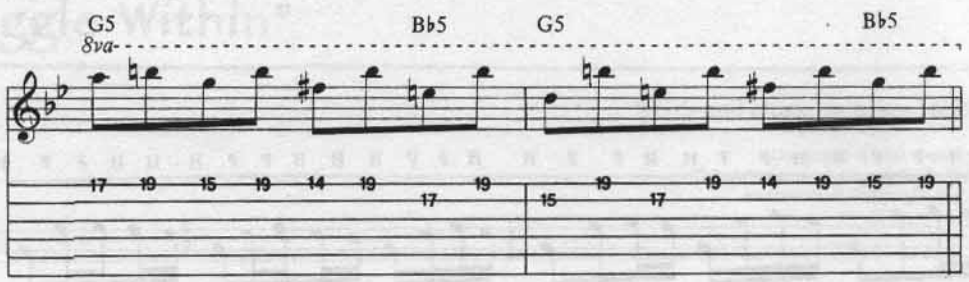
2:28



Seek & Destroy

from *Kill 'Em All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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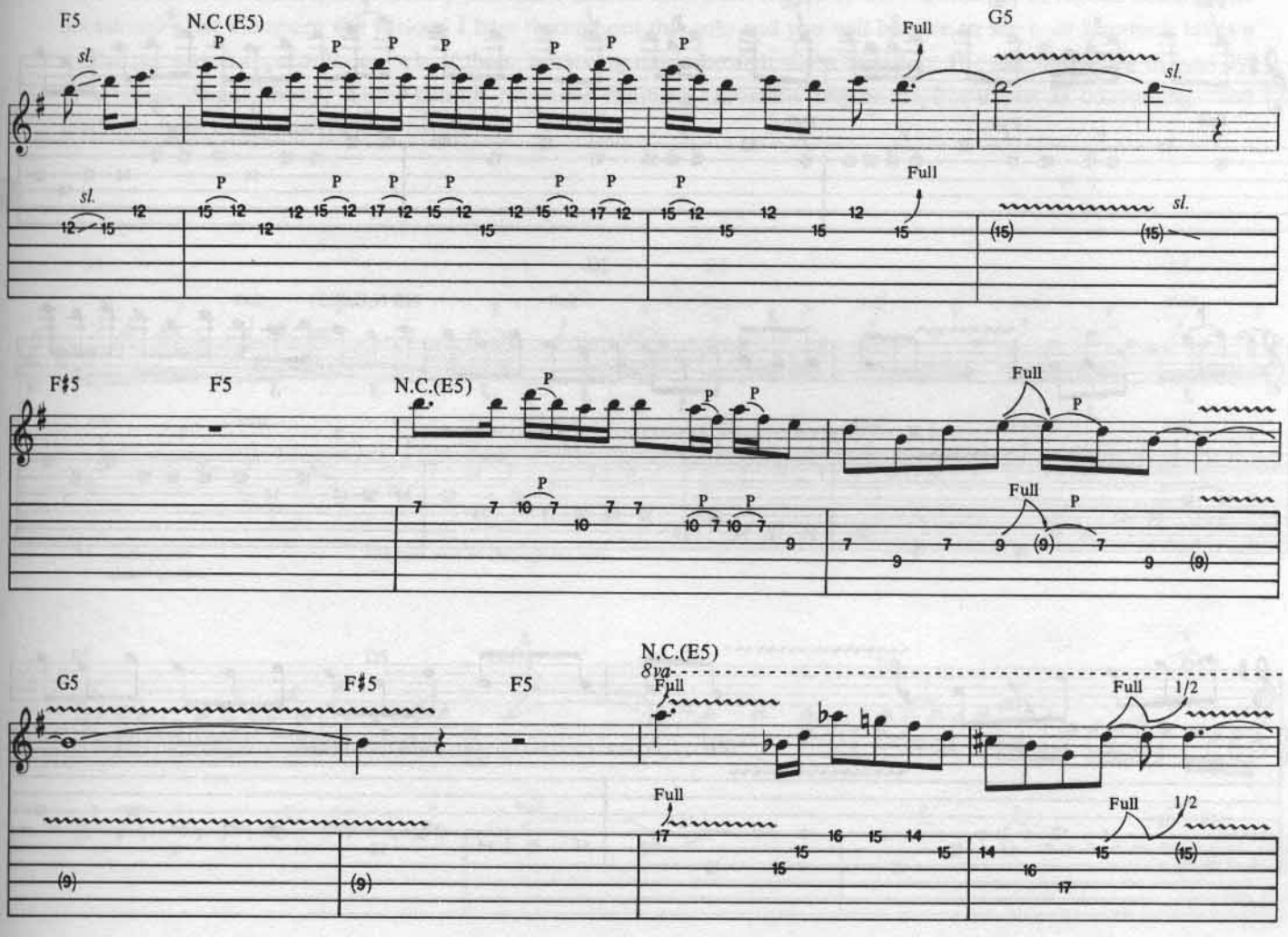
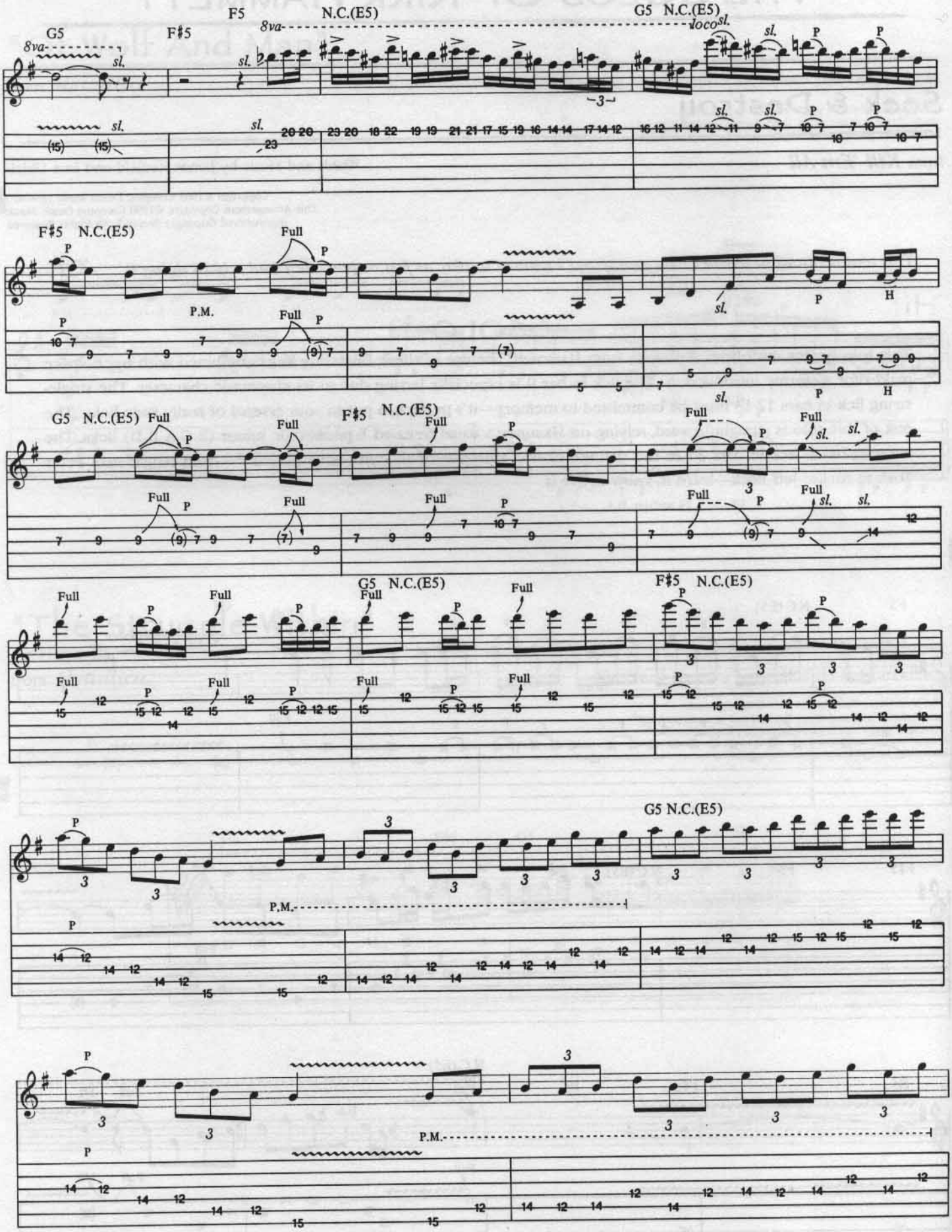
This was a situation where I was young and I wanted to play as fast as possible. I had a blast doing it. -K.H.

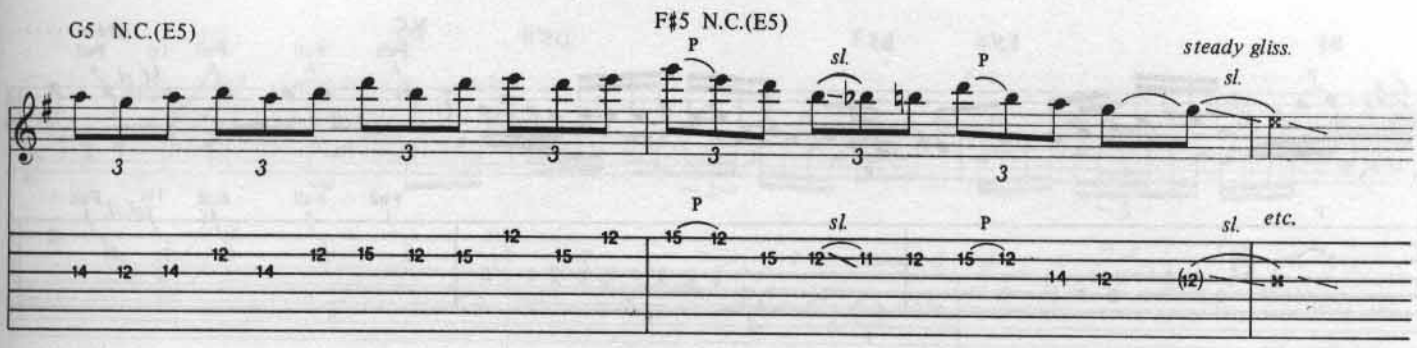
SOLO

This solo begins with brief outbursts from Hammett. The use of these flustering licks combined with open space makes for a stormy introduction. The lick in bar 9 is especially jarring due to its chromatic character. The single-string lick in bars 12-13 must be committed to memory—it's perfect to put in your arsenal of really rude licks. The rest of this solo is straightforward, relying on Hammett's usual frenzied E pentatonic minor (E G A B D) licks. The exercise-based lick in bars 24-26 is a definite classic; guitarists of all styles have played it—from reggae-man Peter Tosh to rocker Jeff Beck—learn it, know it, live it.

3:36




G5
F♯5
F5
N.C.(E5)
G5 N.C.(E5)
8va
loco
sl.
P
Full
P.M.
H



Hit The Lights

from ***Kill 'Em All***

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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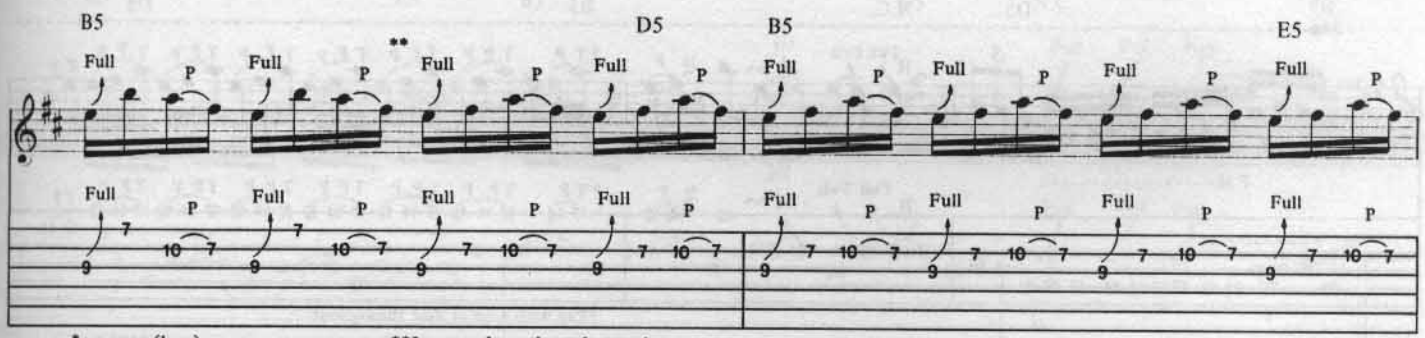
More of the same attitude. I really wanted to be flashy. *-K.H.*

SOLO

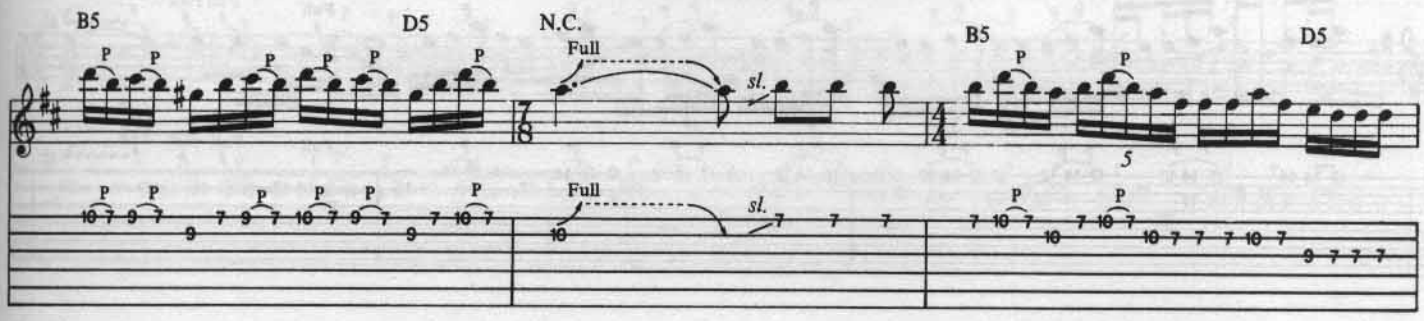
Even though this frenzied solo is fast, the simple, pentatonic-based licks make it quite playable. Hammett plays an almost continuous onslaught of (heavy metalized) classic rock licks, with only the slightest bit of repose heard at the occasional $\frac{7}{8}$ bar. Compare the various $\frac{7}{8}$ bars throughout this solo and you will be sure to see how Hammett takes a similar, yet varied approach on each of them, achieving unity through slight variation. The ascending lick in bars 29-31 screams "Angus Young," who's famous for these climbing chromatic sequences, but is just as convincing—and snarling—here in Hammett's able hands.

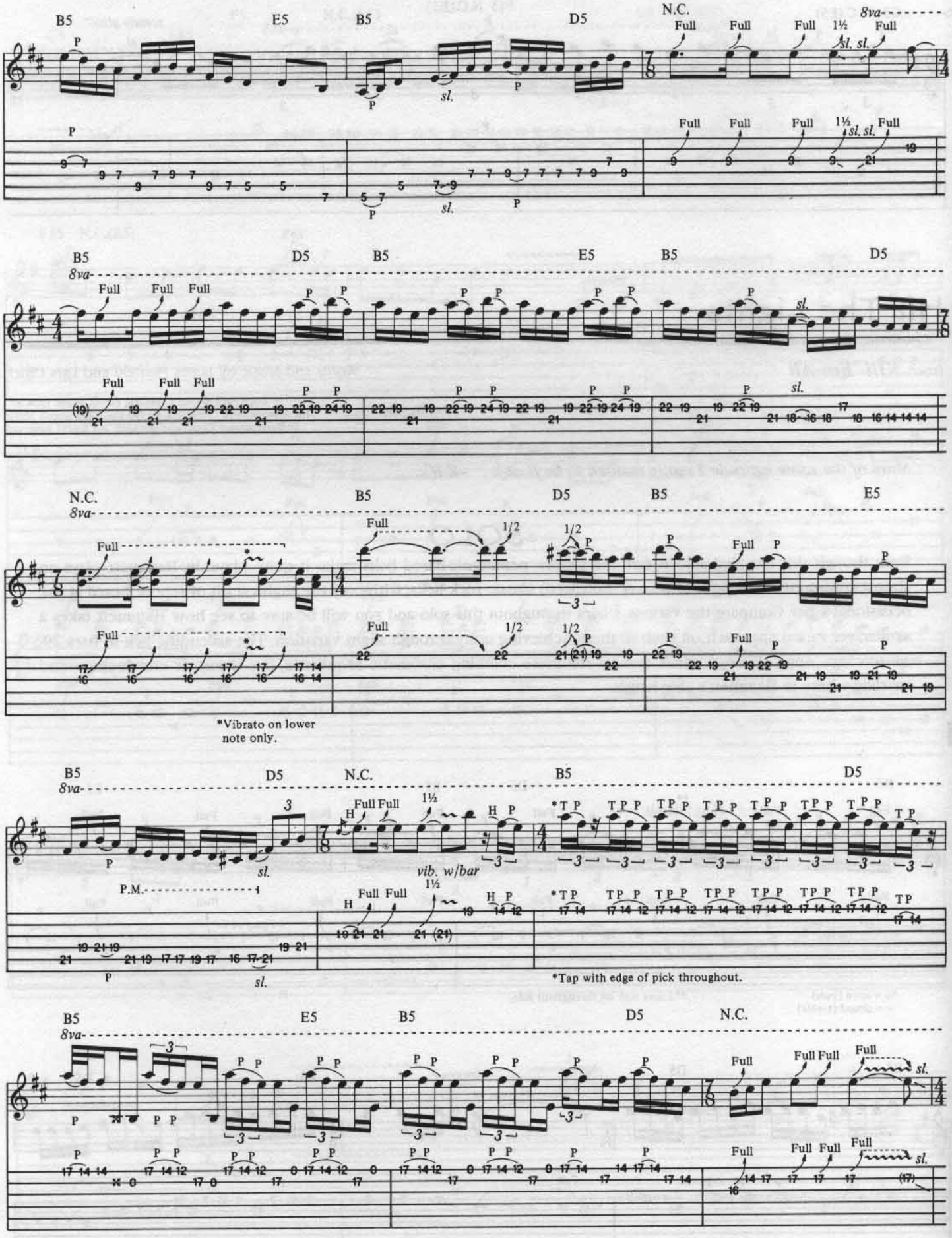
2:57

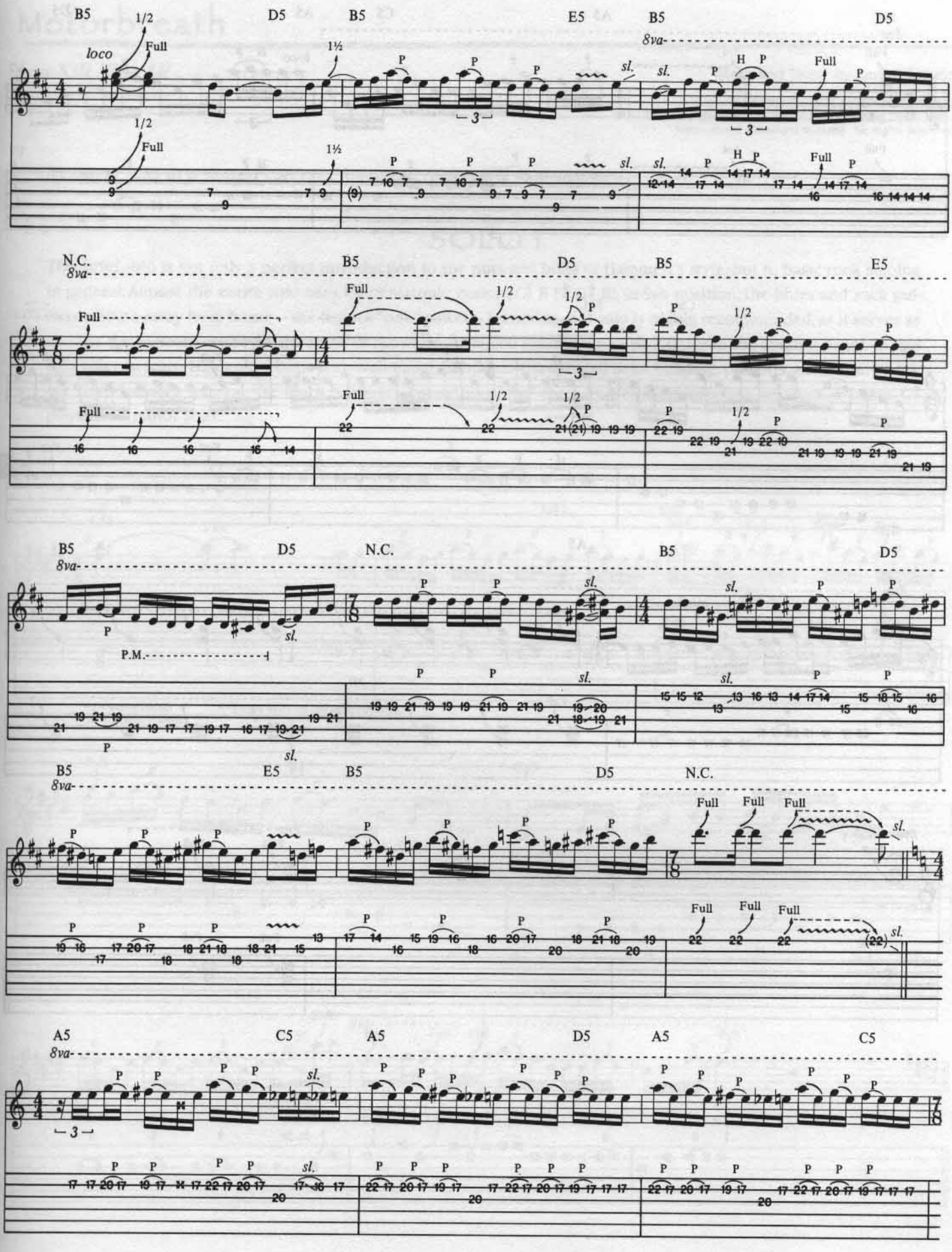


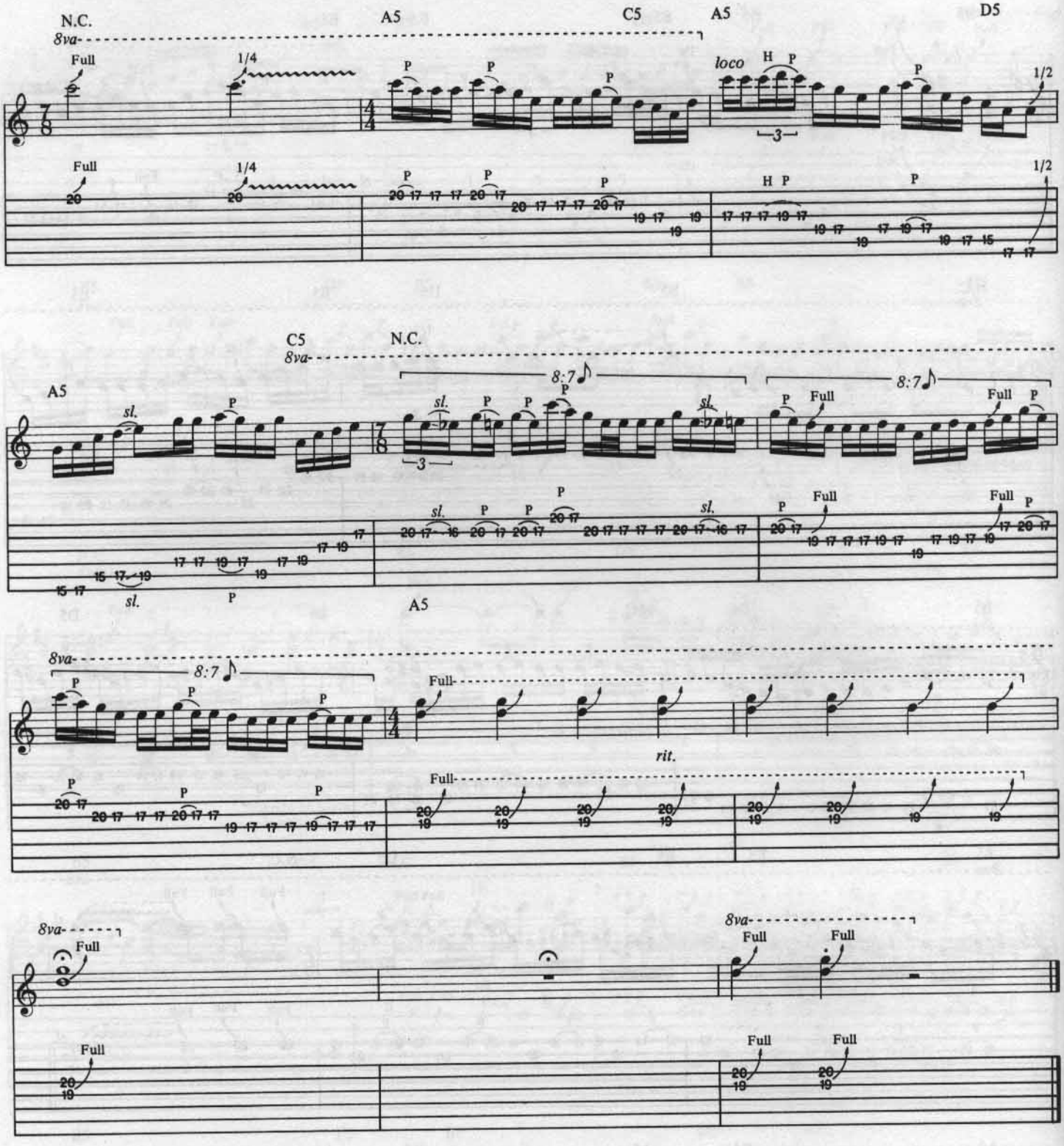
*o = open (bass)
+ = closed (treble)

**Leave wah on throughout solo.




B5
E5
B5
D5
N.C.
8va
Full
1½
sl.
P
B5
D5
B5
E5
B5
D5
N.C.
B5
E5
B5
D5
N.C.
1/2
3
*Vibrato on lower note only.
B5
D5
N.C.
B5
D5
H
P.M.
vib. w/bar
*T P
*Tap with edge of pick throughout.
B5
E5
B5
D5
N.C.


B5
D5
E5
A5
C5
N.C.
8va
loco
Full
1/2
1½
sl.
H P
P.M.


N.C.
A5
C5
A5
D5
8va
Full
1/4
P
loco
H
1/2
C5
N.C.
A5
sl.
8:7
Full
A5
8va
8:7
Full
rit.
8va
Full

Motorbreath

from *Kill 'Em All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield

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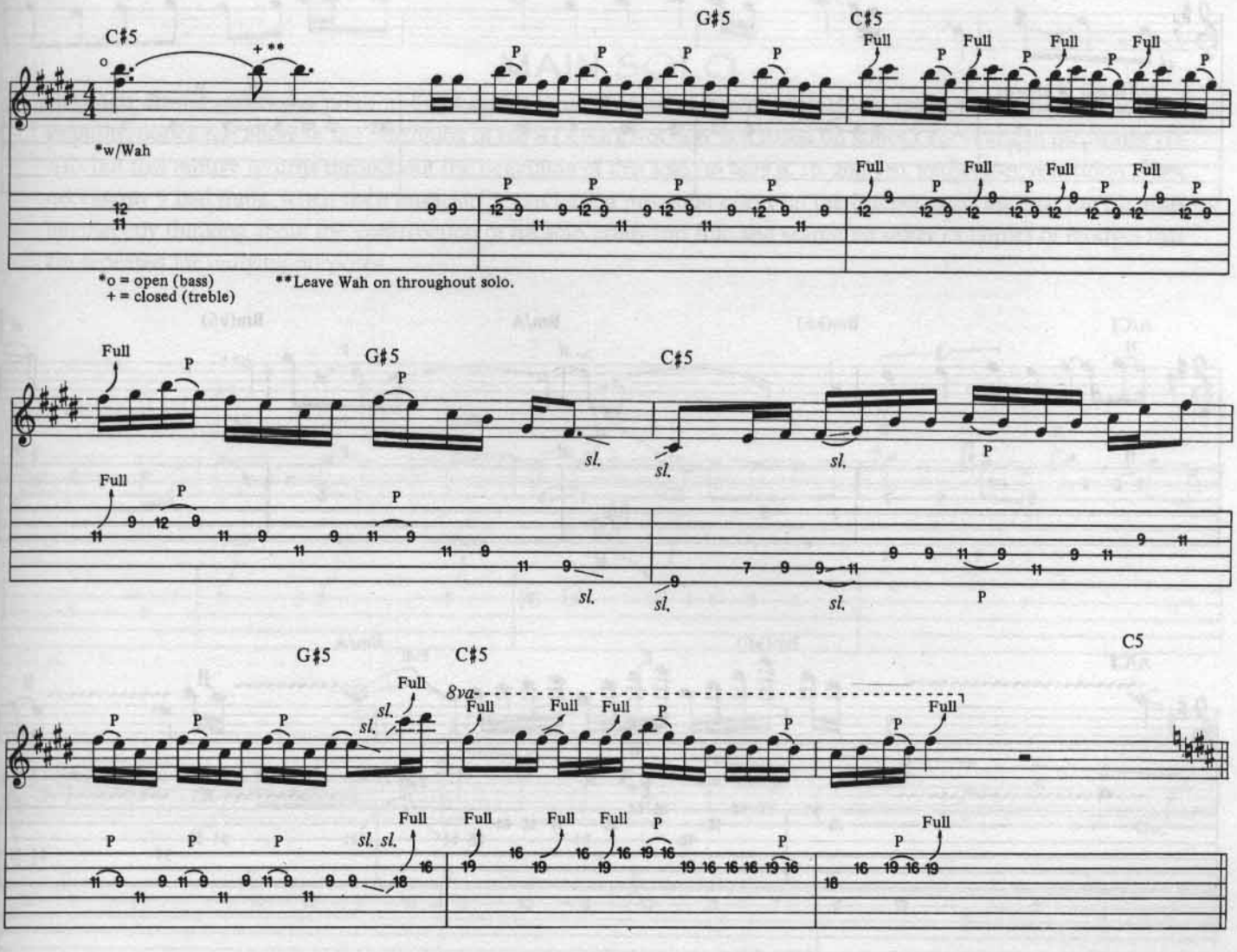
It's bluesy licks in a thrashy context. I found out really early that it worked. *-K.H.*

SOLO 1

This brief solo is not only a perfect introduction to the nuts and bolts of Hammett's style, but to basic rock soloing in general. Almost the entire solo uses C♯ pentatonic minor (C♯ E F♯ G♯ B) in 9th position, the blues and rock guitarists home away from home—the famous "box" pattern. Mastering this solo is highly recommended, as it serves as an ideal preparatory étude for the some of the more advanced solos you will encounter in the coming pages. In this solo you can learn Hammett's basic wah-wah pedal technique, blues-based licks, bending, pull-offs, and more. Check out Tony Iommi's solo on the Black Sabbath classic "Iron Man" for a historical perspective on another heavy C♯ pentatonic minor solo.

1:39



Fade To Black

from *Ride The Lightning*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich,
Cliff Burton and Kirk Hammett

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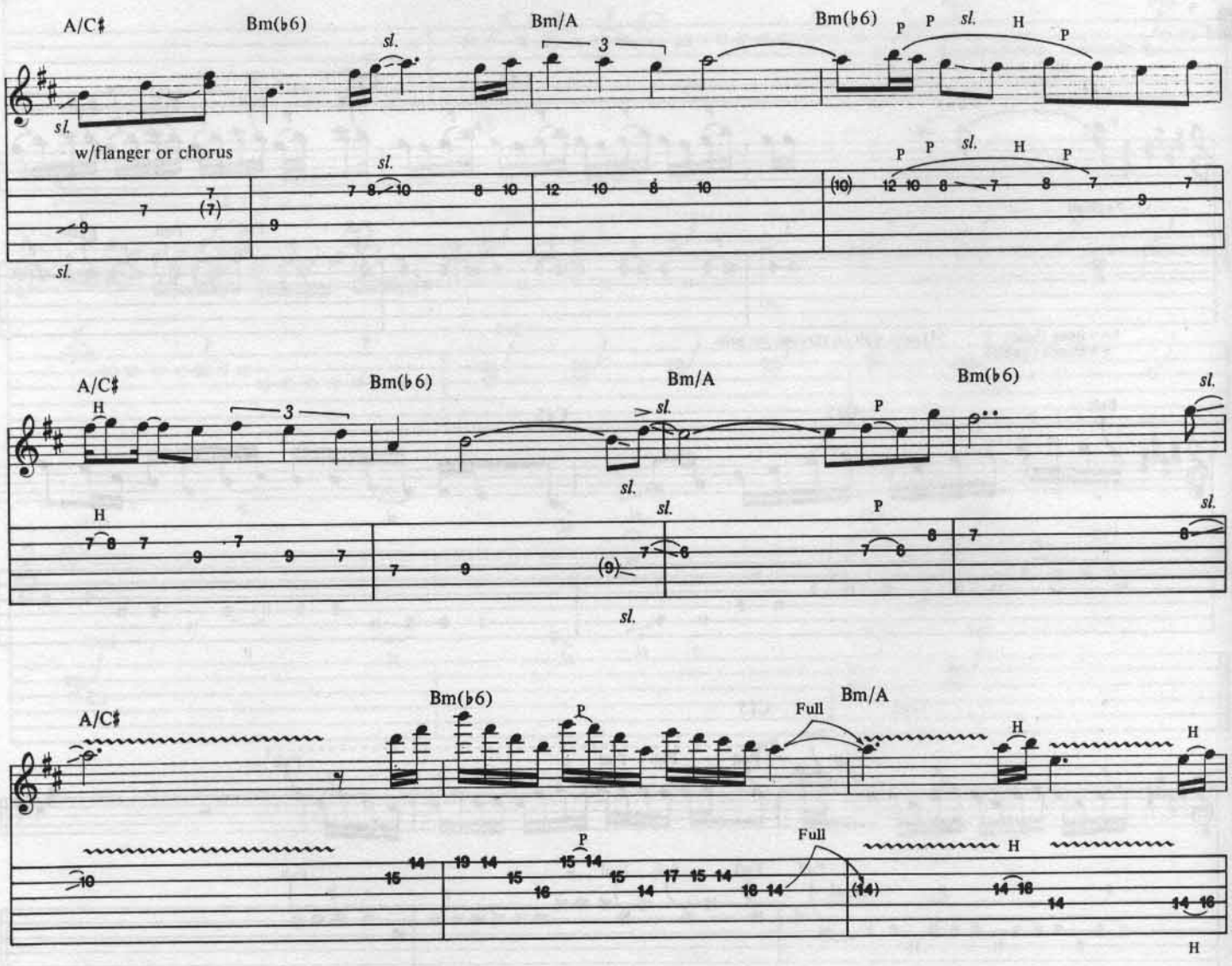
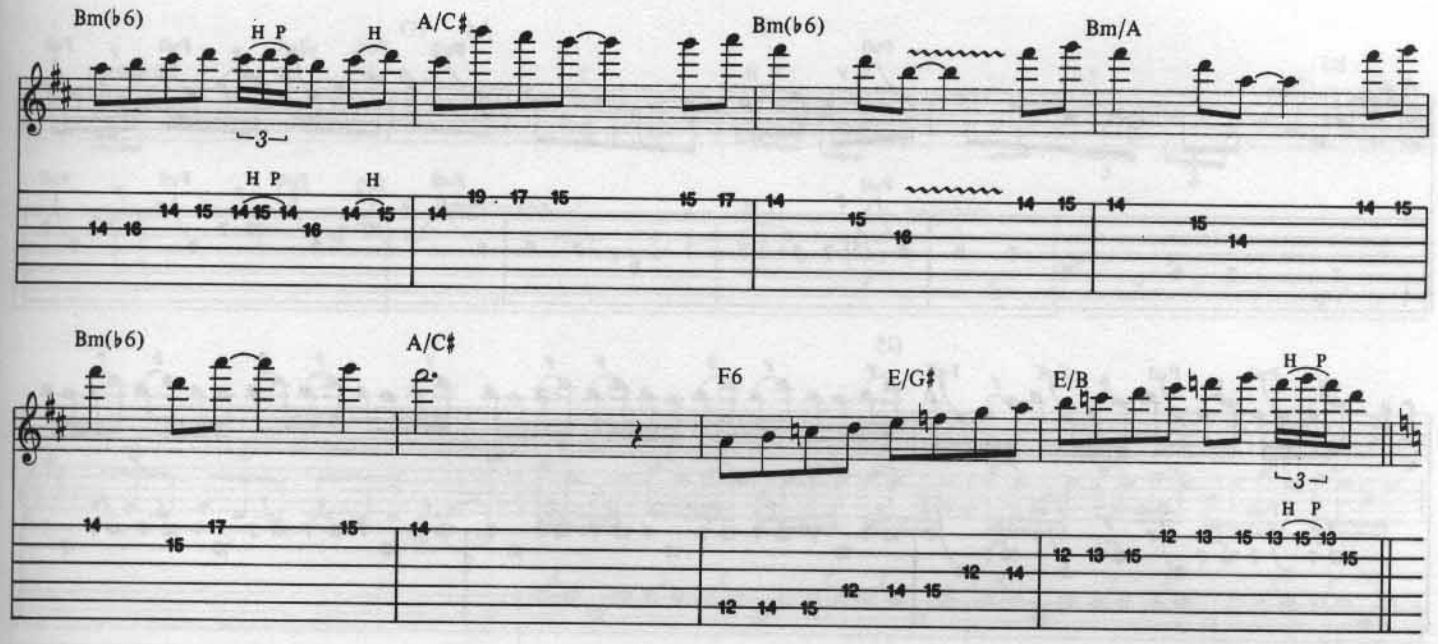
I love the intro solo. I tried to be as melodic and emotive as possible. *-K.H.*

INTRO SOLO

This solo is played with a heavily distorted tone, the treble rolled off, and a touch of chorus, all contributing to the warm, expressive sound. The heavy distortion gives the lines the necessary sustain and compression, and the lack of treble takes the edge off the tone. The lesson to be learned here is that you don't have to always blaze through a solo; a great solo, such as this one, makes equal use of long, held notes as well as contrasting bursts of notes.

0:13

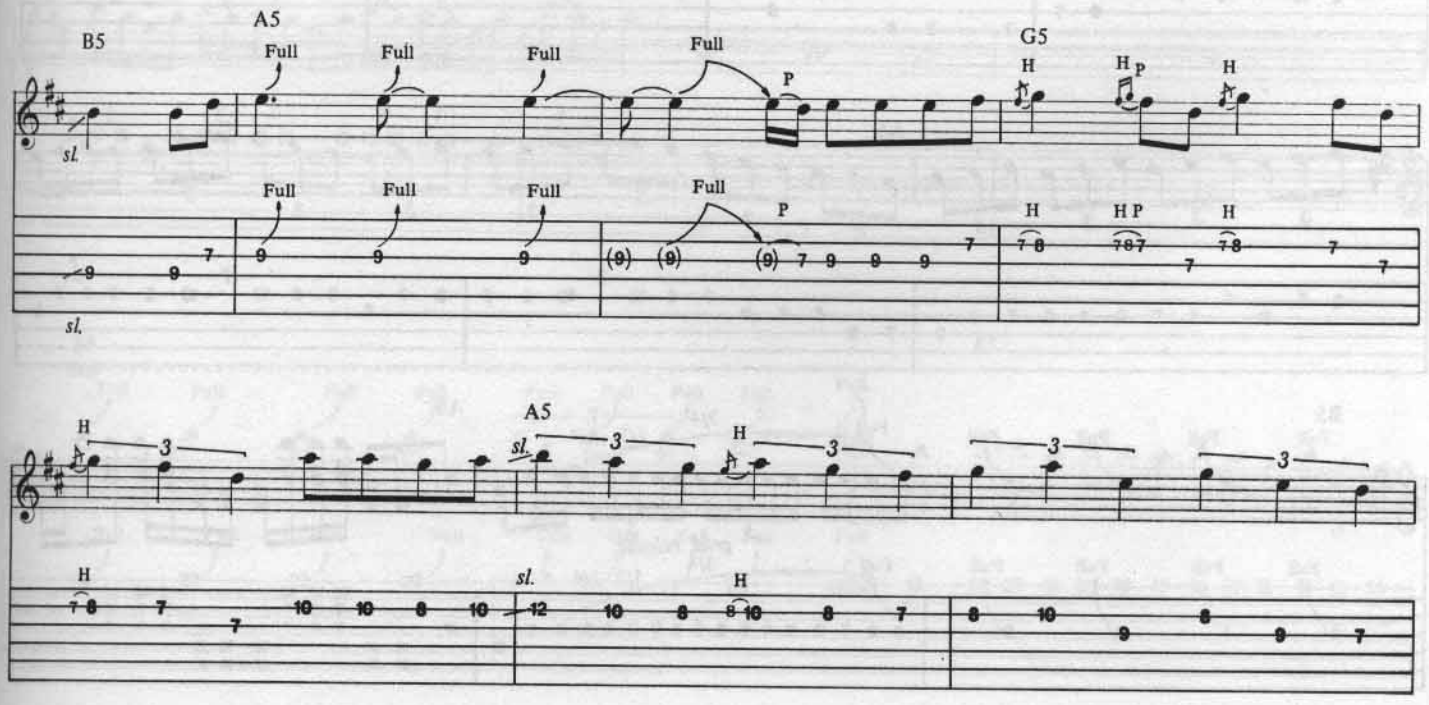


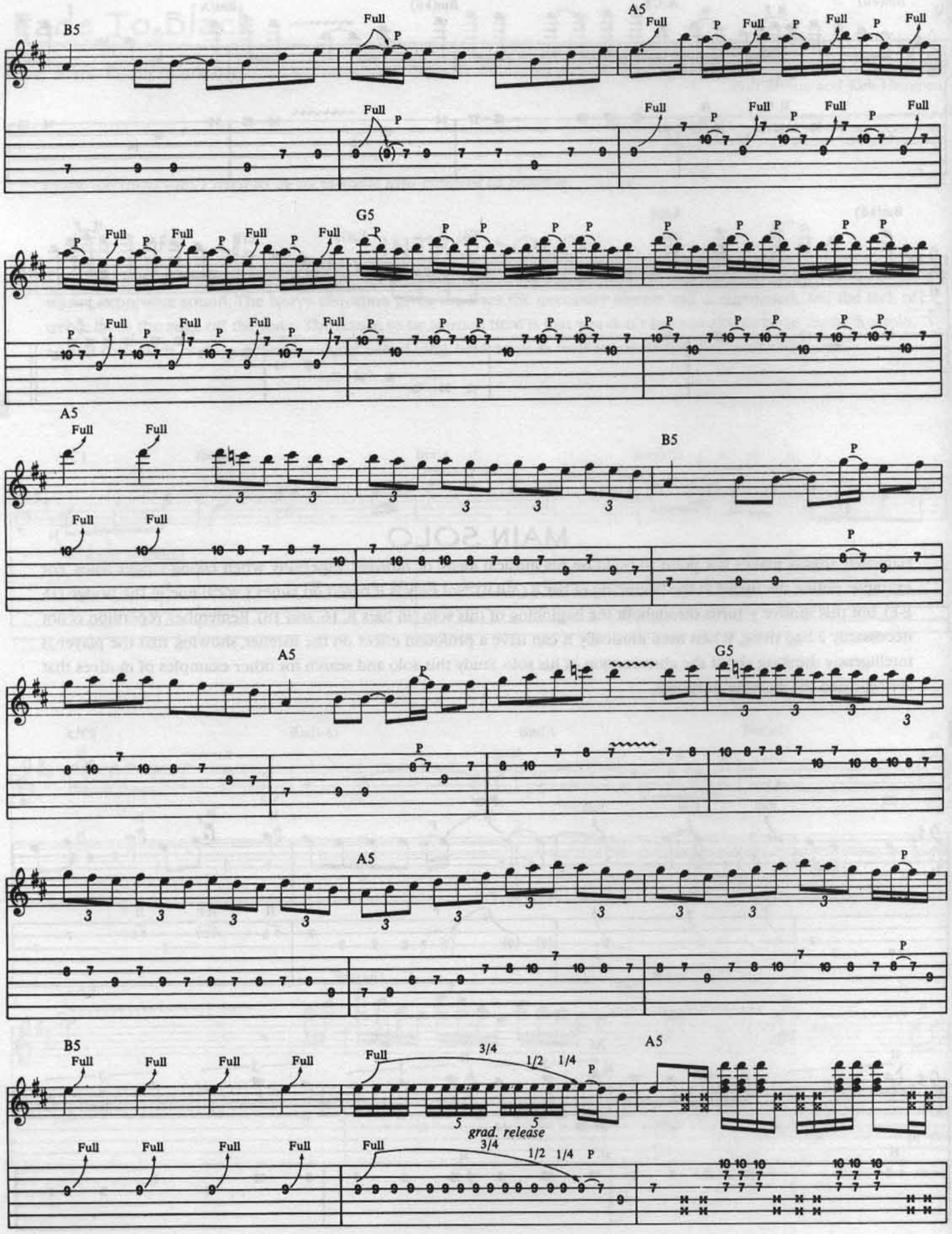


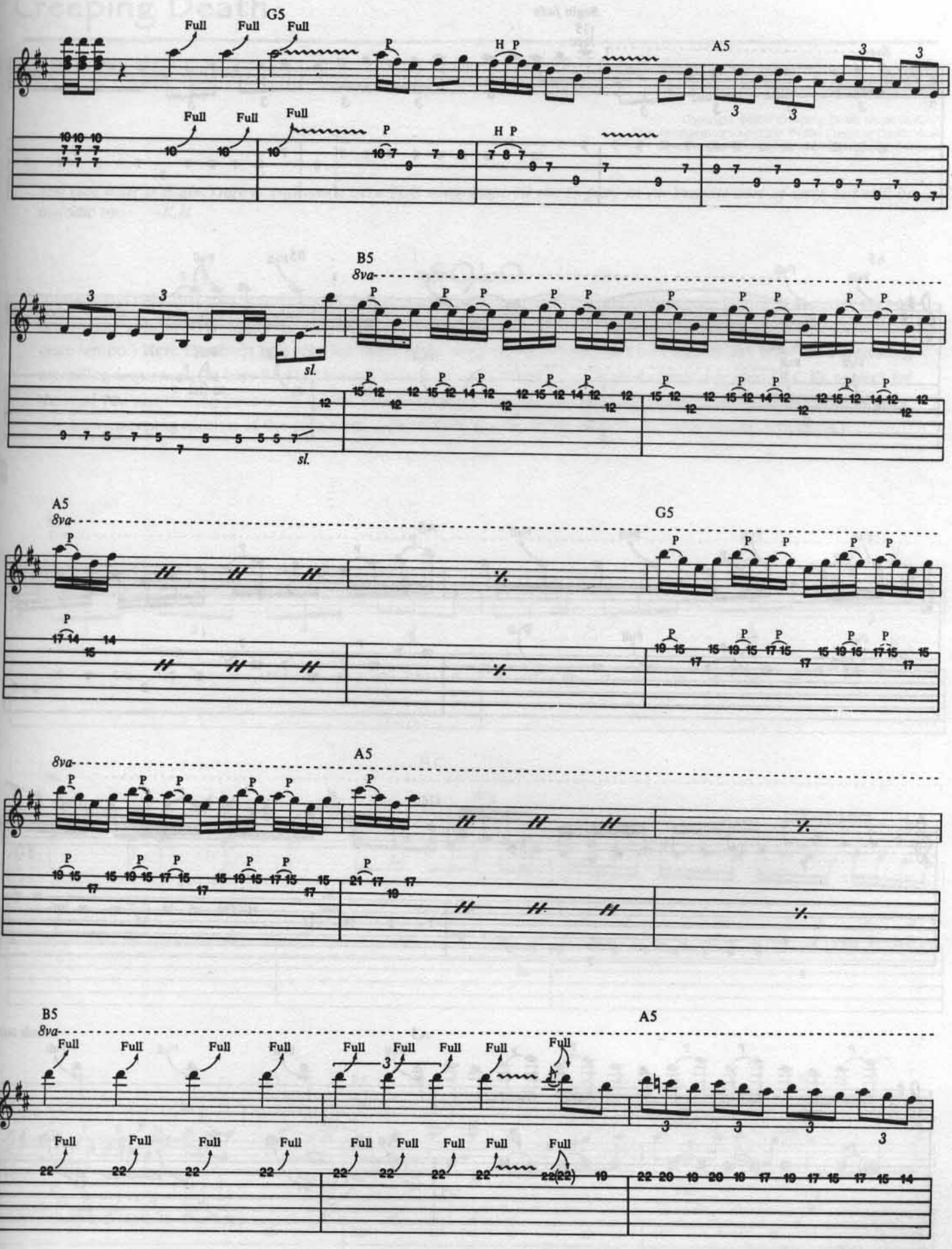
MAIN SOLO

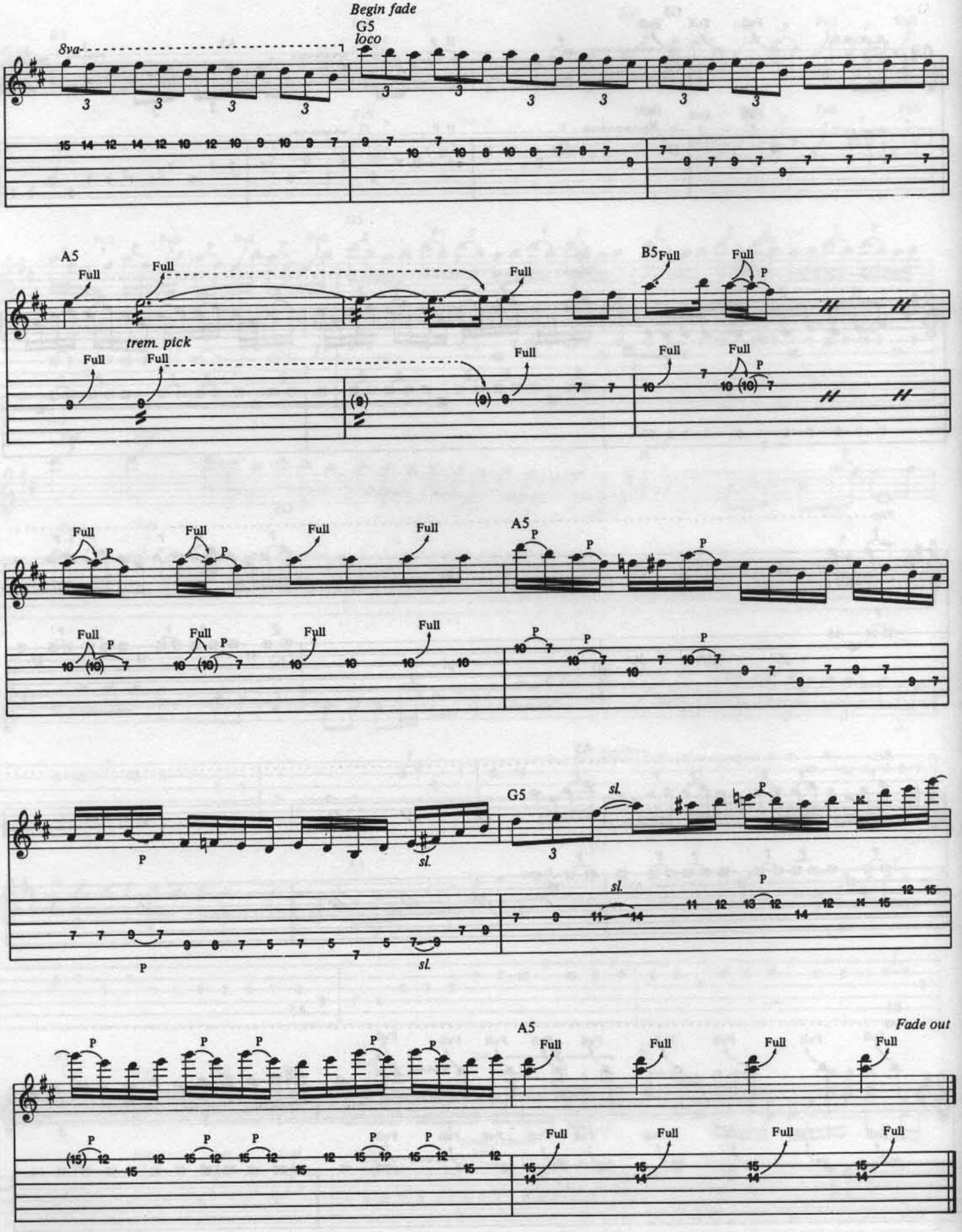
Hammett always makes it a point to build on his musical ideas, or *motives*, especially when taking longer solos. For example, notice the figure in the beginning of bar 8 (A-B-B). Not only is it based on James's vocal line in the bridge (D-E-E), but this motive returns throughout the beginning of this solo (in bars 8, 16, and 18). Remember, repetition is not necessarily a bad thing. When used musically it can have a profound effect on the listener, showing that the player is intelligently thinking about the construction of his solo. Study this solo and search for other examples of motives that are repeated for unifying purposes.

5:19




B5
A5
G5
Full
P
grad. release
3/4
1/2
1/4


G5
A5
B5
8va
sl.


Begin fade
G5
loco
8va
A5
Full
B5
P
trem. pick
sl.
Fade out

Creeping Death

from *Ride The Lightning*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich,
Cliff Burton and Kirk Hammett

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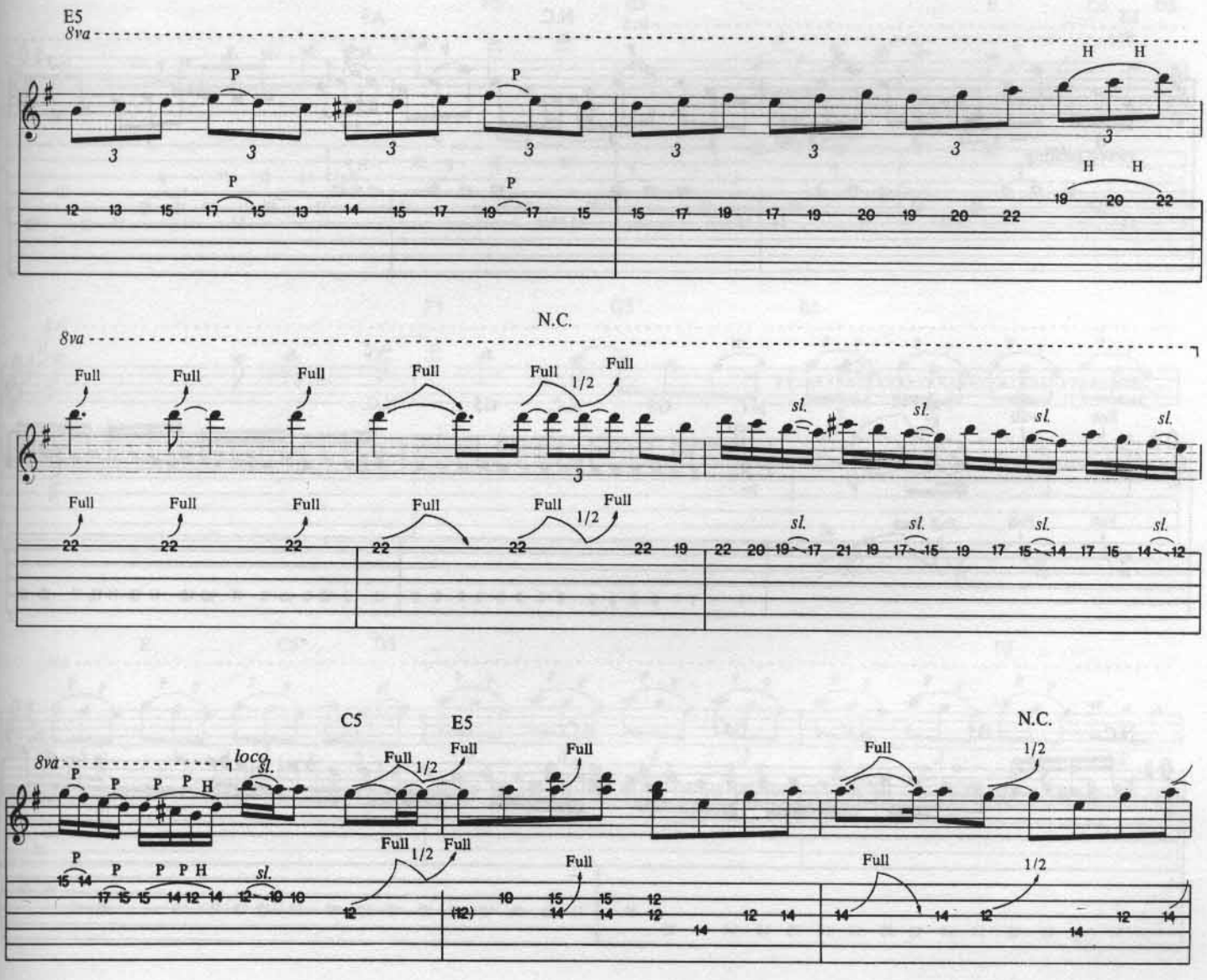
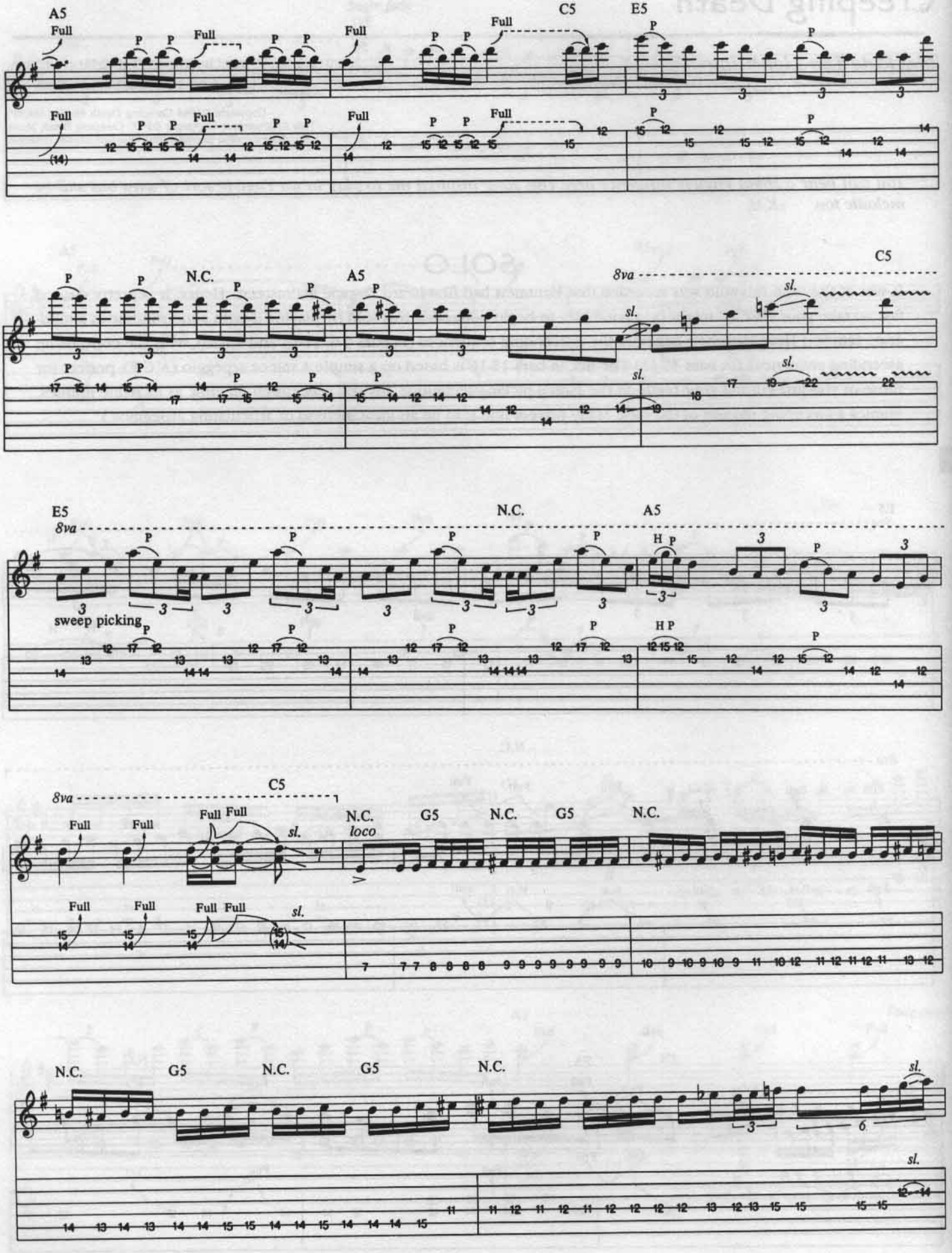
You can hear a slight Yngwie influence here. This song inspired me to play in an Yngwie sort of way, but still be melodic too. -K.H.

SOLO

It was at the time this solo was recorded that Hammett had first heard Yngwie Malmsteen. Hence, it is pretty darned fast, so take your time. (It might be a good idea to begin perfecting this solo by playing it with a metronome at a moderate tempo.) Here Hammett balances the descending sequences (in bars 5-6, 11-13 and 25-26), with the contrasting ascending sequences (in bars 35-41). The lick in bars 15-16 is based on a simple A minor arpeggio (A C E), perfect for those of you just cutting your teeth on the sweep-picking technique. (By the way, *sweep picking*, as its name implies, mimics a sweeping motion of the pick. Many players find it to be an ideal method of articulating arpeggios.)

2:48

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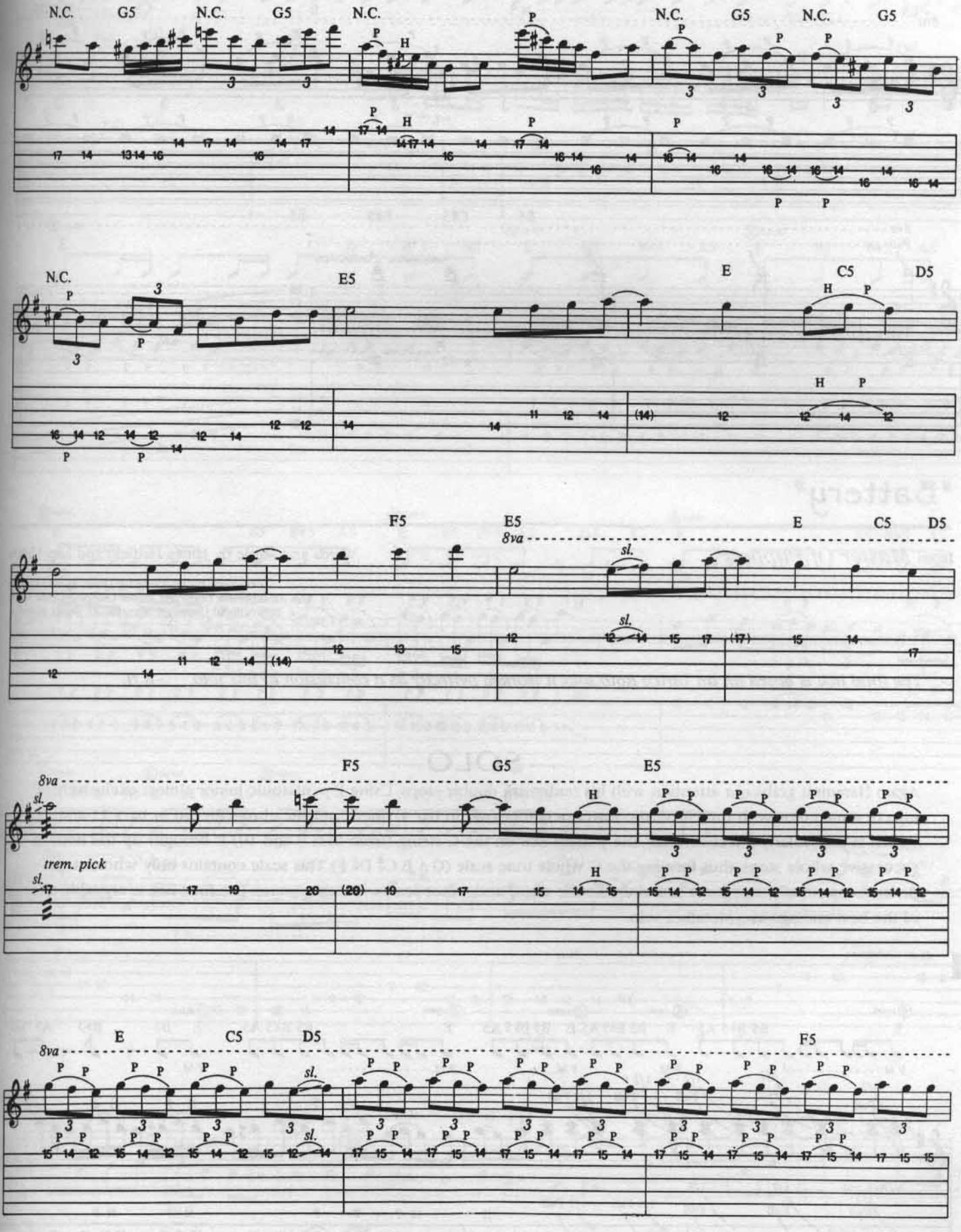
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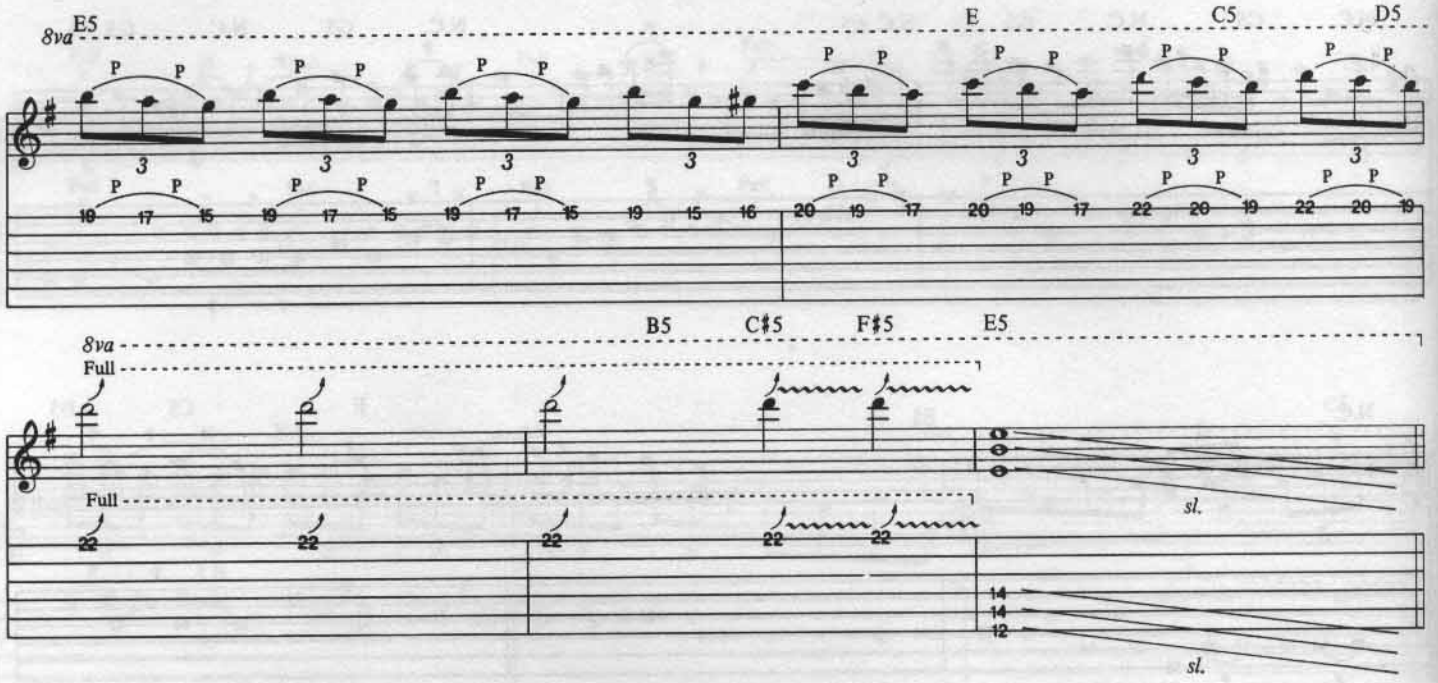

"Battery"

from *Master Of Puppets*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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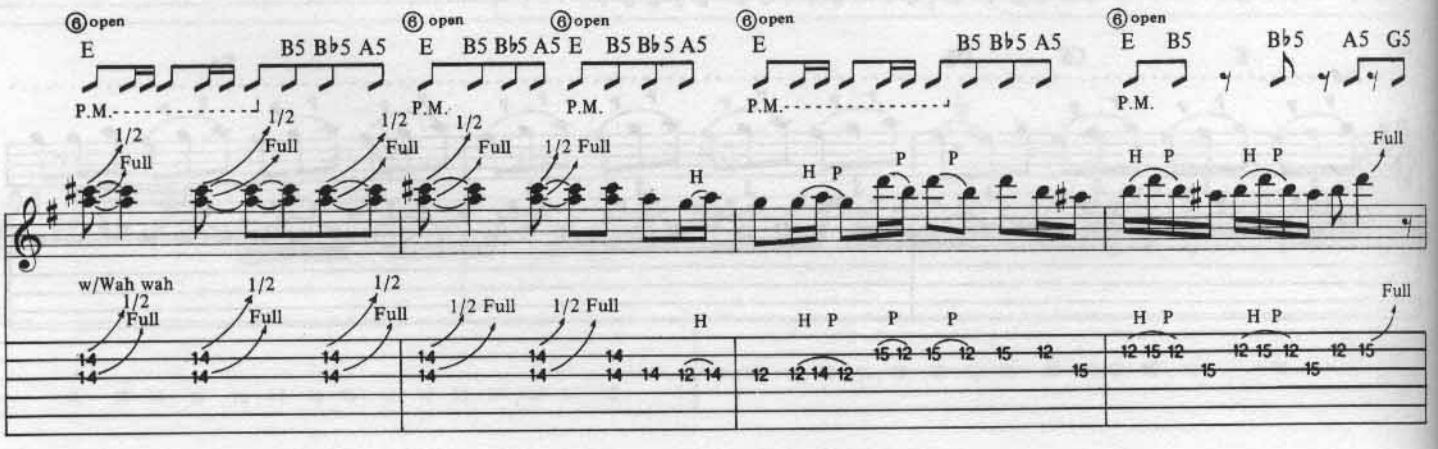
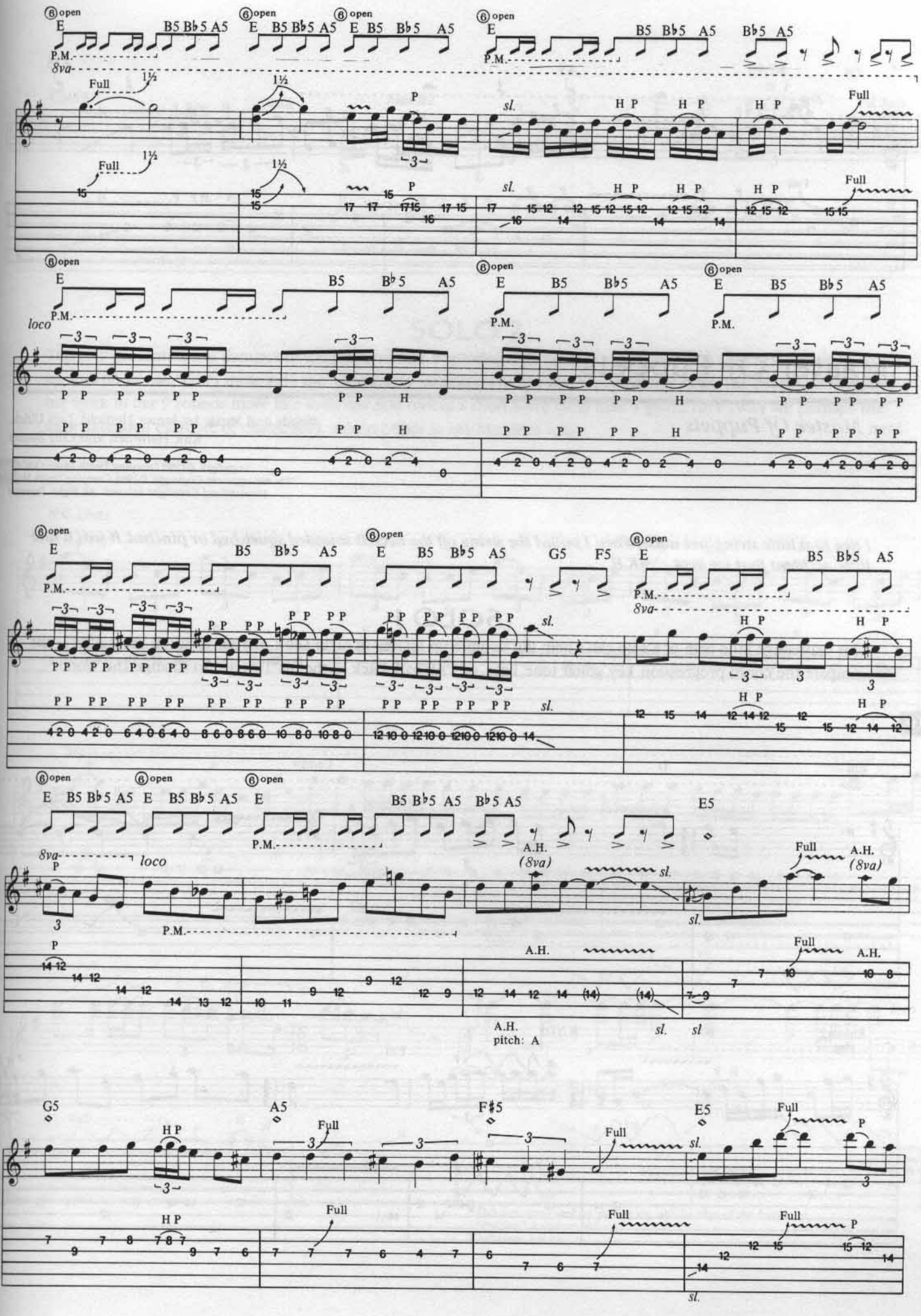
The final lick is based on an Ulrich Roth solo; it worked perfectly as a conclusion to this solo. -K.H.

SOLO

Again Hammett grabs our attention with his trademark double stops. Using E pentatonic minor almost exclusively, he injects some color with the chromatic lower neighbor (A♯) in bar 4. Check out the chromaticism in bars 11 and 12, which is particularly effective. Here, the pull-off lick on the G string (from bars 9 and 10) is brought up the neck in successive whole steps, thus forming the G whole tone scale (G A B C♯ D♯ F). This scale contains only whole steps—no half steps at all—and has a sound unlike the major and minor scales, and the modes. The final lick is arguably one of the best endings of a Metallica solo.

3:18




⑥ open
E
B5 B♭5 A5
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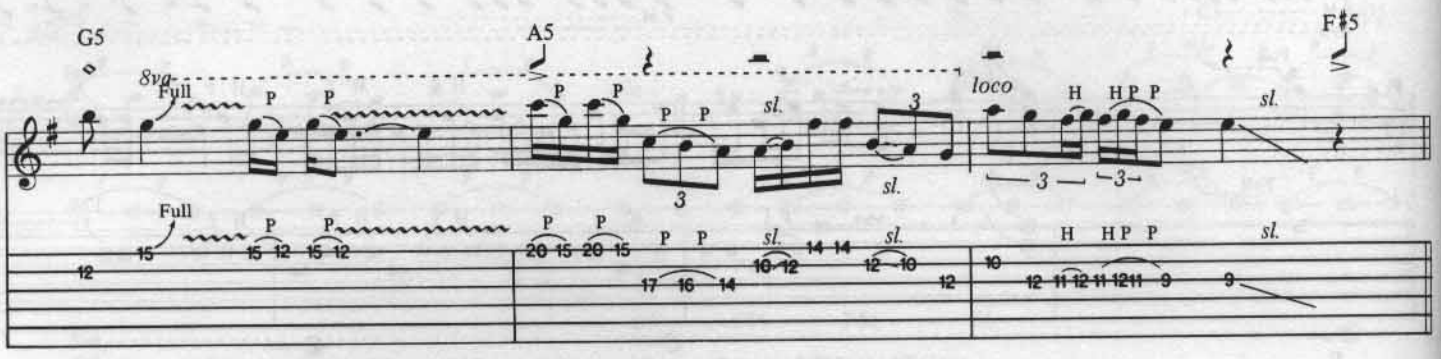

"Master Of Puppets"

from *Master Of Puppets*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich,
Kirk Hammett and Cliff Burton

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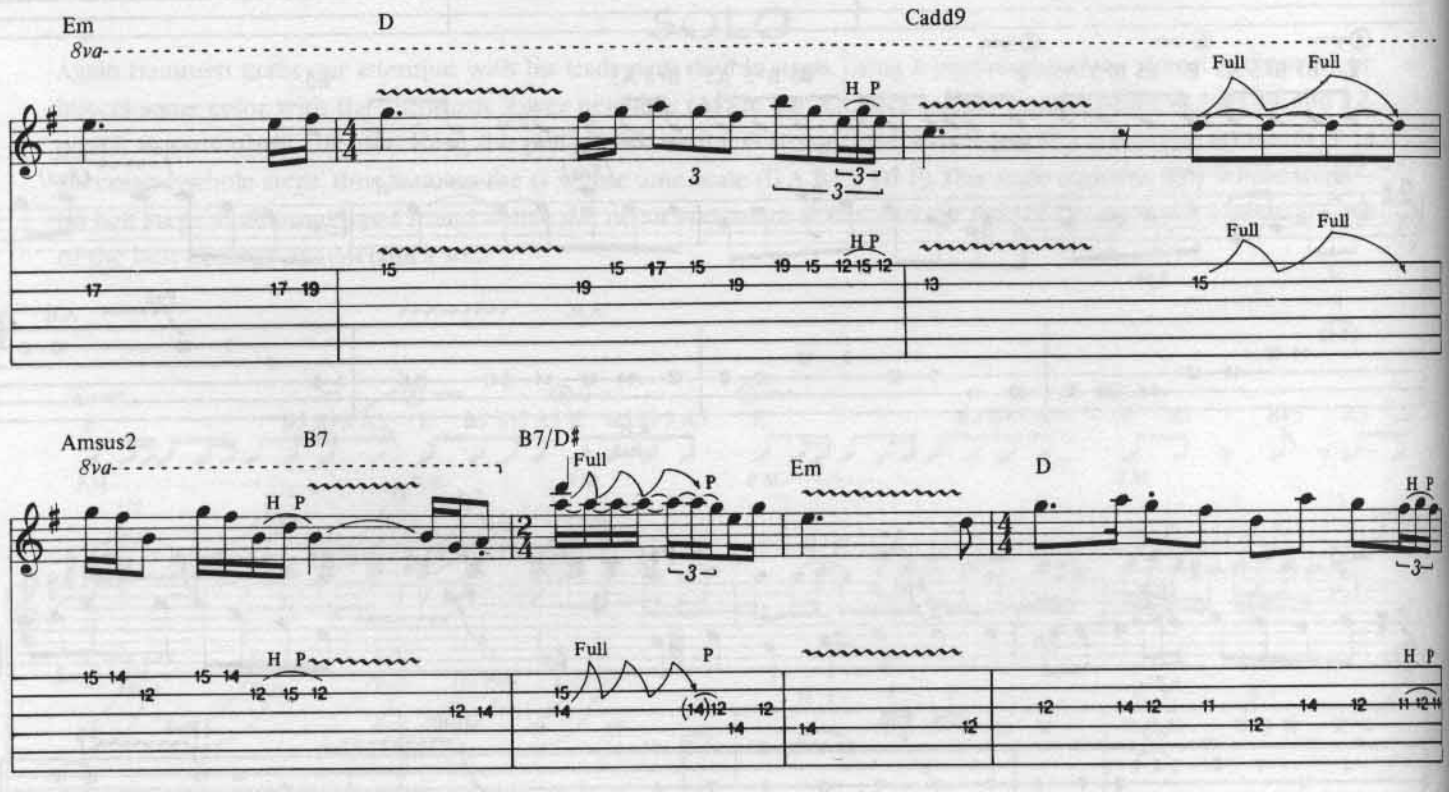
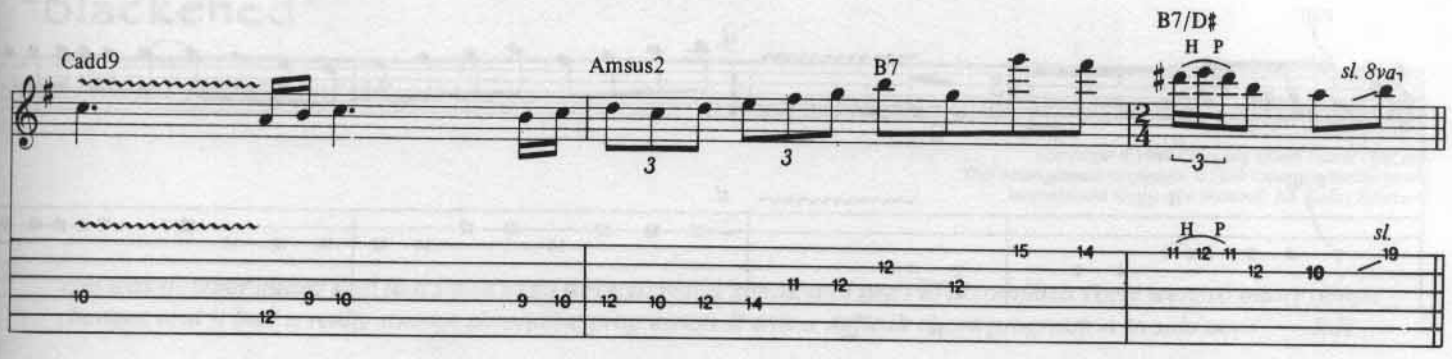
I like that little string/fret noise. When I pulled the string off the neck it sounded squelched or pinched. It was a nice little accident that we kept. -K.H.

SOLO 1

This expressive little gem of a solo can't help but conjure up images of Alvin Lee's playing with Ten Years After—just compare the chord progression, key, guitar tone, licks, etc. All hark back to the hit "I'd Love To Change The World."

4:10

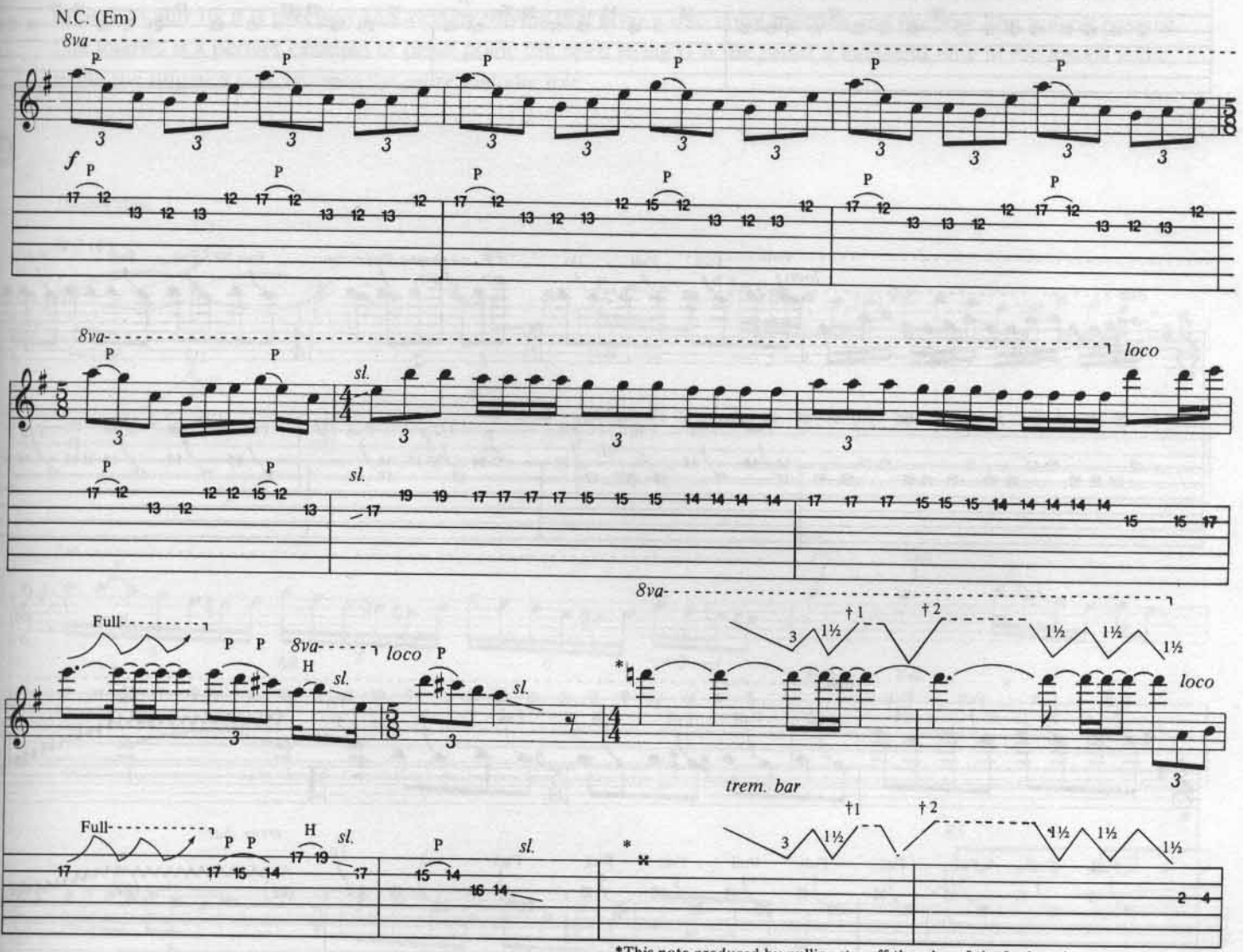




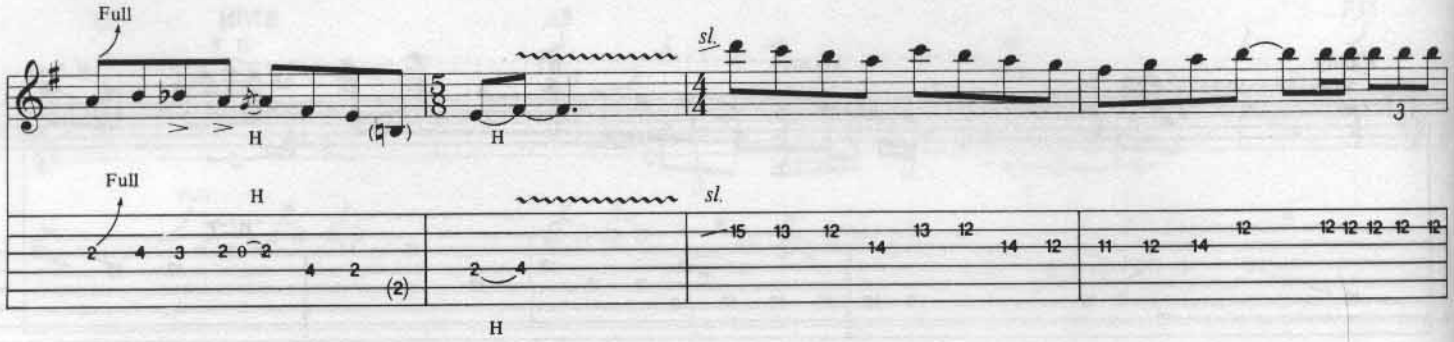
SOLO 2

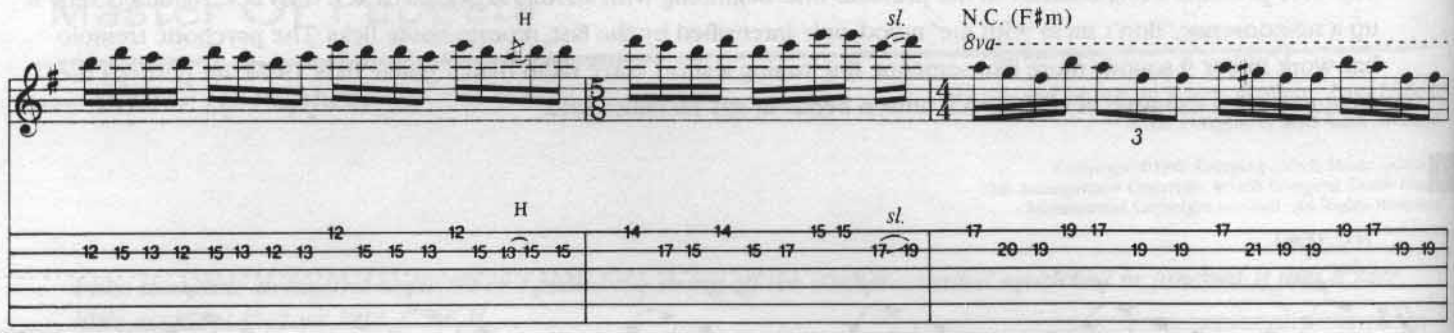
This solo presents a real contrast to the previous one. Beginning with an Am9 arpeggio (A C E G B) lick, Hammett sets up a no-nonsense, "don't mess with me" mood, only intensified by the fast, repeated-note licks. The psychotic tremolo bar work in bar 9 sounds more like someone fine tuning a short wave radio than a guitar. Bars 19-24 are perhaps the most extended example of classic-rock unison bends in any Metallica solo.

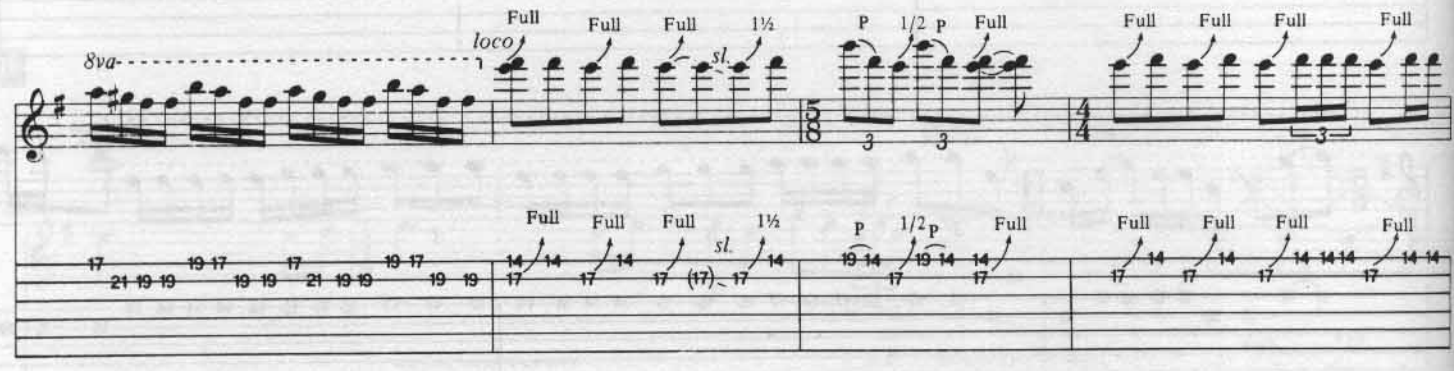
5:42

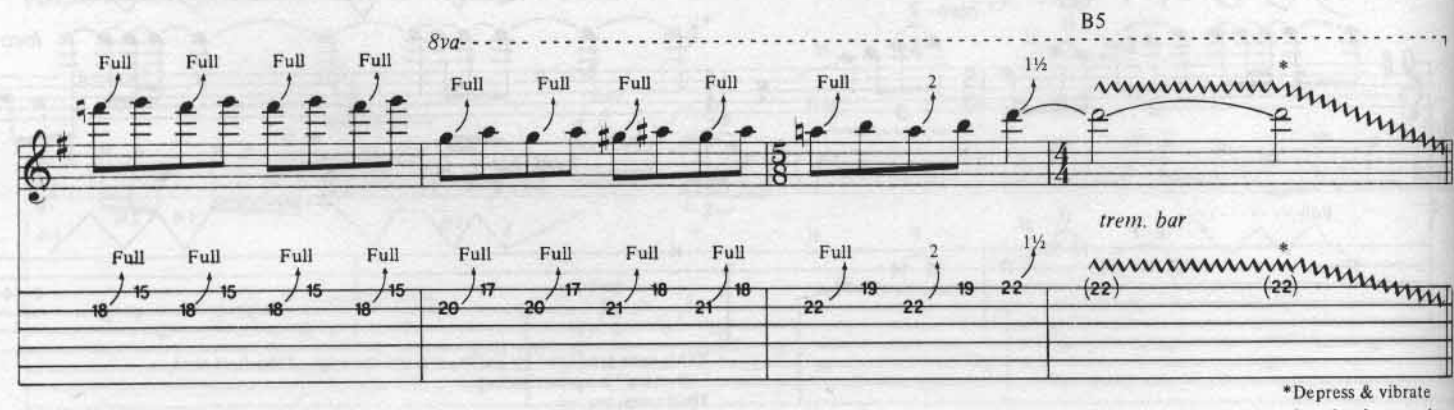


*This note produced by pulling stg. off the edge of the fretboard, "fretting" it against pickup
†Pull trem. bar up.









*Depress & vibrate bar simultaneously.

"Blackened"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Jason Newsted

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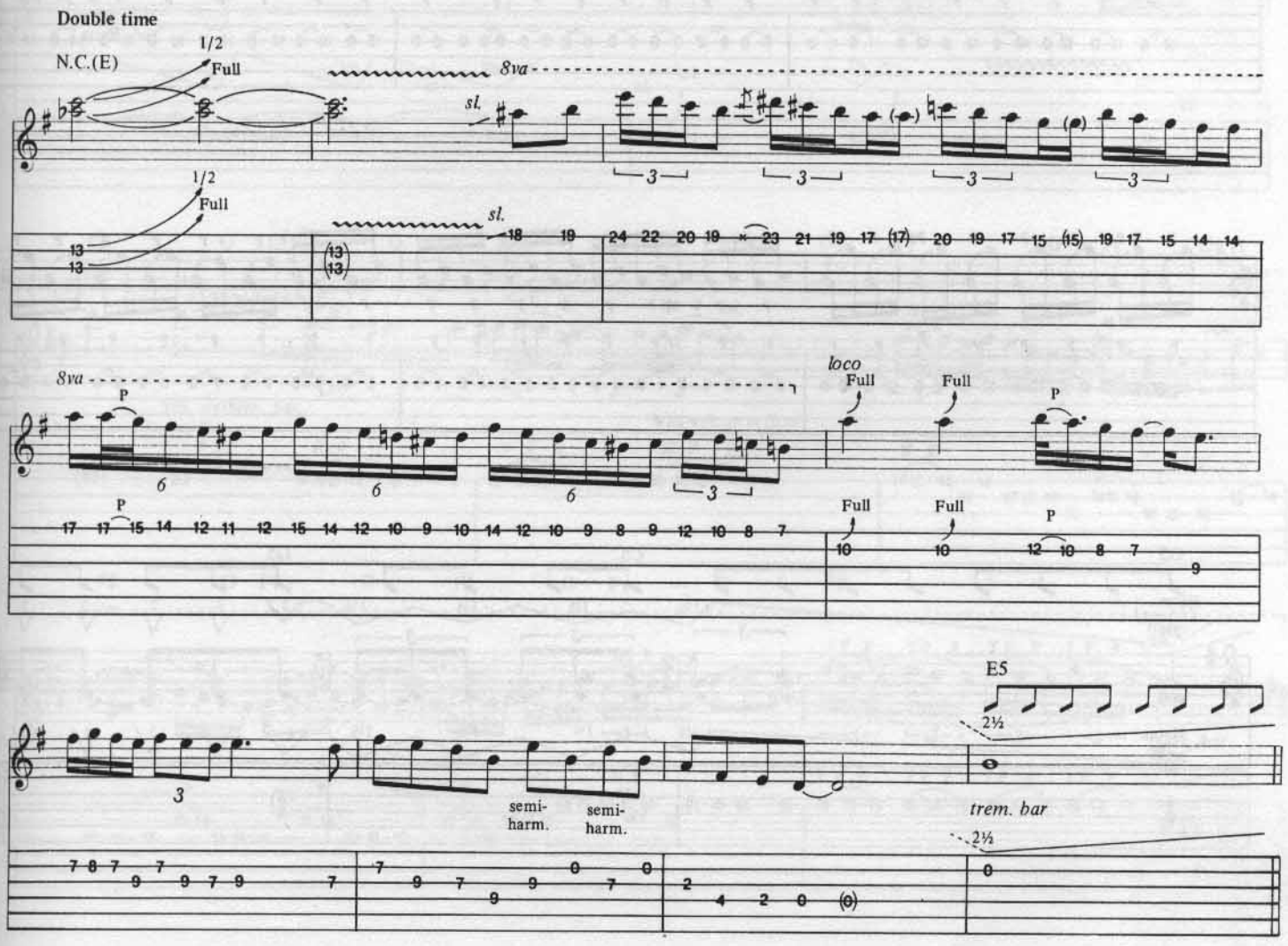
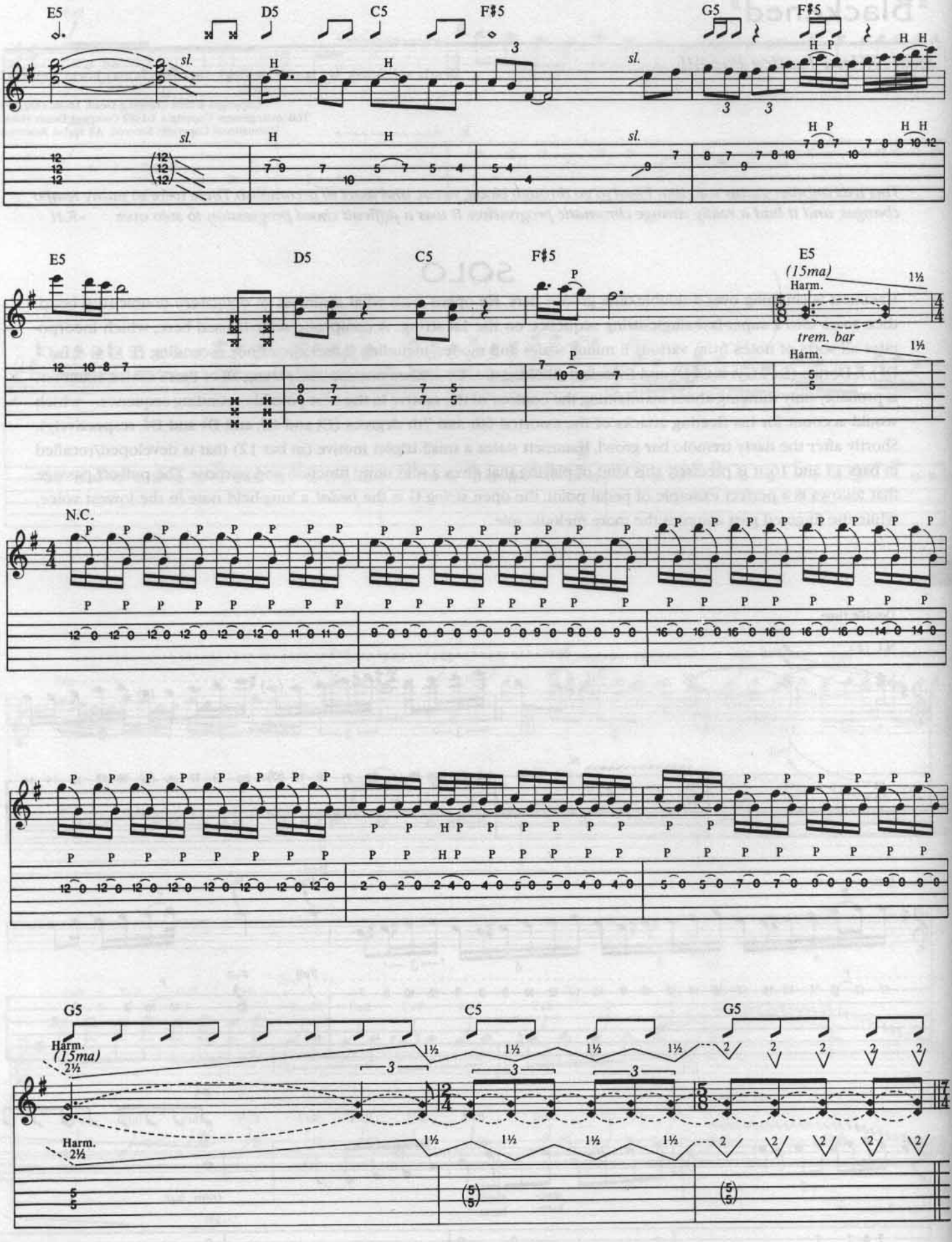
This was another guitar solo that I had to go through blood, sweat, and tears to accomplish. There were so many tempo changes, and it had a really strange chromatic progression. It was a difficult chord progression to solo over. *-K.H*

SOLO

Hammett is jamming over a double-time groove here. He opens with what is almost an obligatory double-stop bend, then soars into a super-fast single-string sequence on the 1st string. A composite scale is used here, which incorporates all sorts of notes from various E minor scales and modes, including E melodic minor, ascending (E F♯ G A B C♯ D♯), E Dorian (E F♯ G A B C♯ D) and E Aeolian (E F♯ G A B C D). Rather than contemplating all of these scales, Hammett is probably only thinking about maintaining the contour of the motive in the best possible sounding sequence—which would account for his fleeting attacks of the assorted 6th and 7th degrees (C♮ and C♯, and D♮ and D♯, respectively). Shortly after the nasty tremolo bar growl, Hammett states a small triplet motive (in bar 12) that is developed/recalled in bars 14 and 16; it is precisely this kind of playing that gives a solo unity, function and purpose. The pull-off passage that follows is a perfect example of pedal point: the open string G is the *pedal*, a long-held note in the lowest voice, while the fingered part assumes the more melodic role.

5:02




E5
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F♯5
G5
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sl.
H
H P
H H
3
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D5
C5
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E5
(15ma)
Harm.
1½
trem. bar
N.C.
G5
C5
G5
Harm.
(15ma)
2½
1½
2

"Eye Of The Beholder"

from ...*And Justice For All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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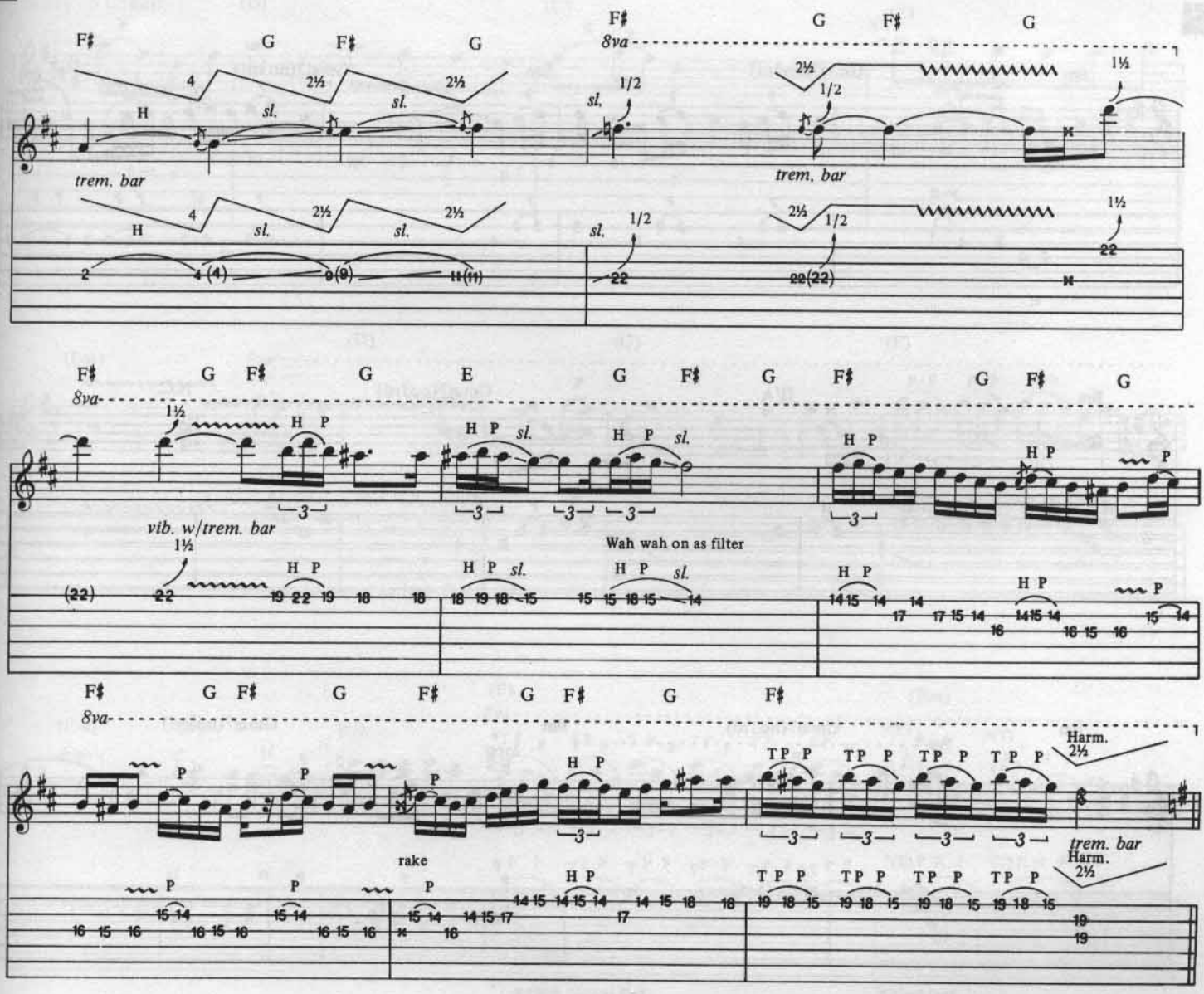
I like the [tremolo] bar work on this. I think the way the guitar solo starts is really dynamic. ***-K.H.***

SOLO

Hammett stays faithful to the F♯ Phrygian dominant (F♯ G A♯ B C♯ D E), a mode of the B harmonic minor scale. The Phrygian dominant has a Spanish flavor, especially when played over a I-♭II progression, though here Hammett solos more like he just had a traumatic experience with a habañero hot pepper, rather than playing like a traditional flamenco player. The deep bar dips in the opening are especially effective on the G-string. The bar is always capable of more dramatic dips on the thickest strings in each string group (the G and low E). Ever try getting a good dive bomb on the high E or D string?

4:56



"One"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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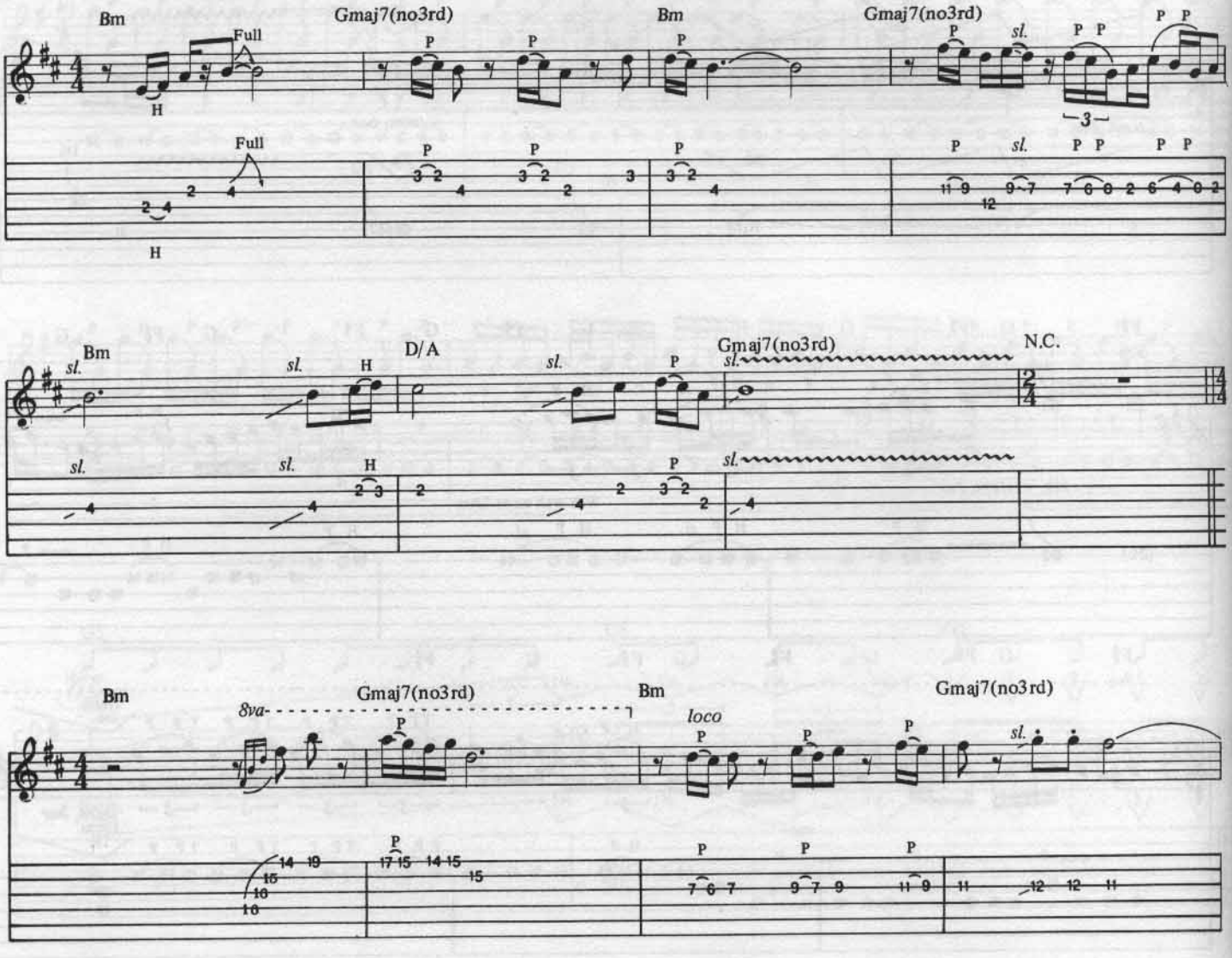
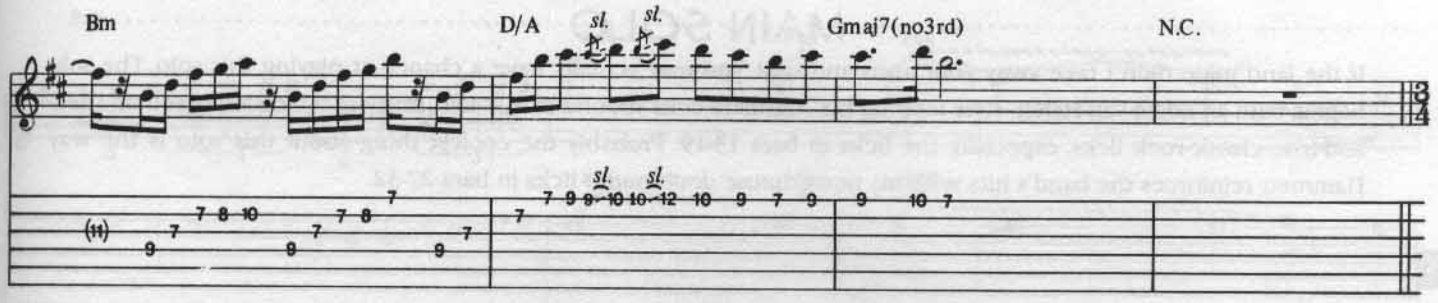
There are times when I've felt like being very melodic and emotive, and I think I've pulled it off well. Though, the second solo . . . playing that live with a clean sound just didn't cut it, so now I play it with the neck pickup on full volume. -K.H.

INTRO SOLO

Clean tone, key of B minor, what next? Well, we all know this somber and mild mood can't last for very long. The chord progression includes some beautiful voicings in B minor, the perfect backdrop for some expressive solo lines. Here, Hammett stays firmly rooted in B Aeolian (B C♯ D E F♯ G A), notice his use of contrasting rhythmic durations, slides, bends, pull-offs and sensitive vibrato. Most of the licks here are closely related to the harmony he is playing over, such as the sweep in bar 9. In bars 13 and 14 Hammett plays a flowering gesture that ornaments a step-wise line. (Shown with arrows.)

0:37

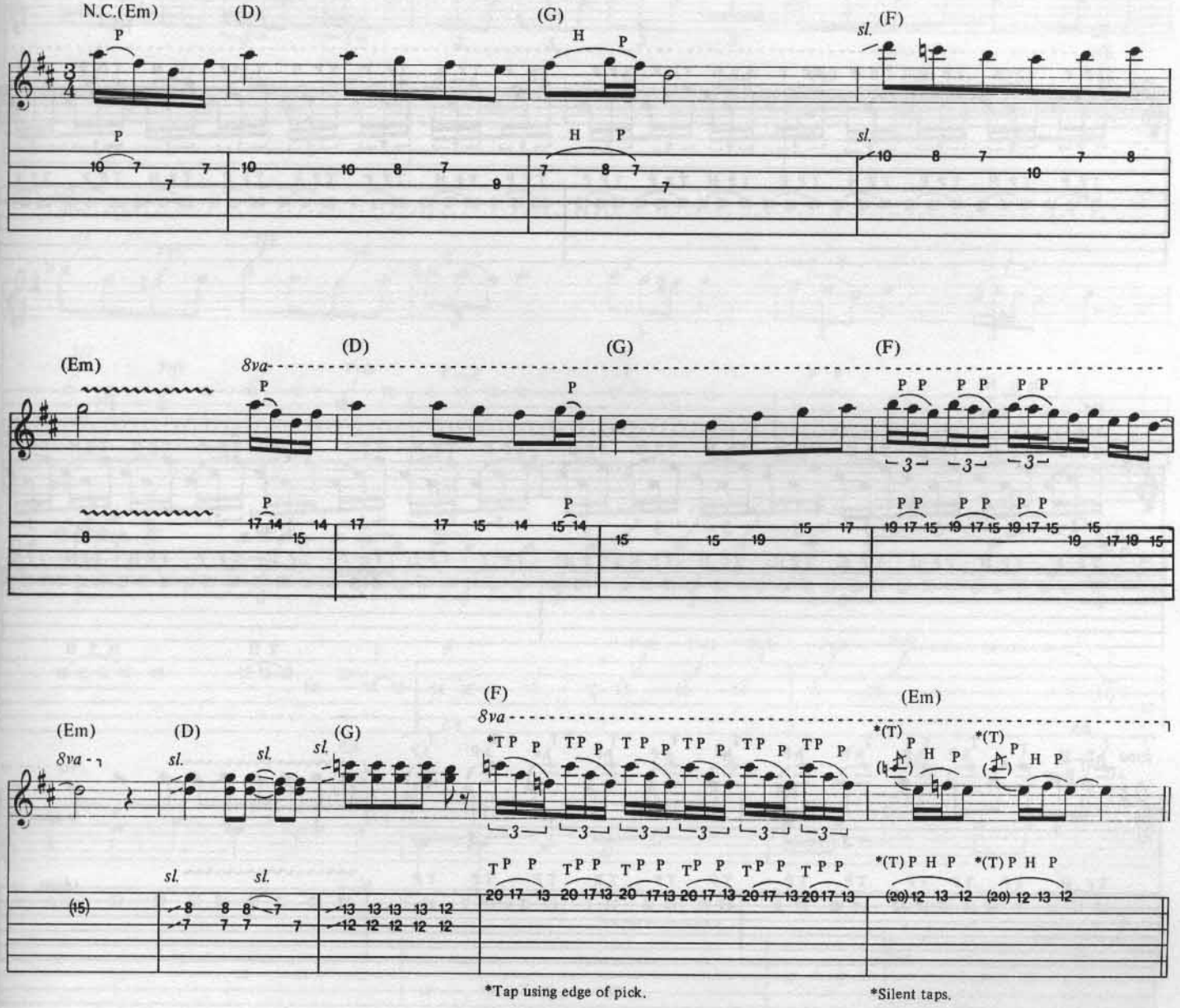




SOLO 2

The implied harmonies in Hetfield's nylon-string part center around D major, the relative major of the song's key, B minor. The only chord that is foreign to the key is F, which is borrowed from D minor, where it is the III chord. Hammett solos here with the same mellifluous approach he took in the previous solo, getting just a little more intense, by adding the sextuplet pull-off lick in bar 8 and the tapping/pull-off lick in bar 12, for example. Hammett's scale choices are the most obvious ones (i.e., the scales that create the least amount of tension with the harmony). The only chromaticism (C♮) occurs over the F and G, which is necessary to avoid implying a harsh dissonance (C♯).

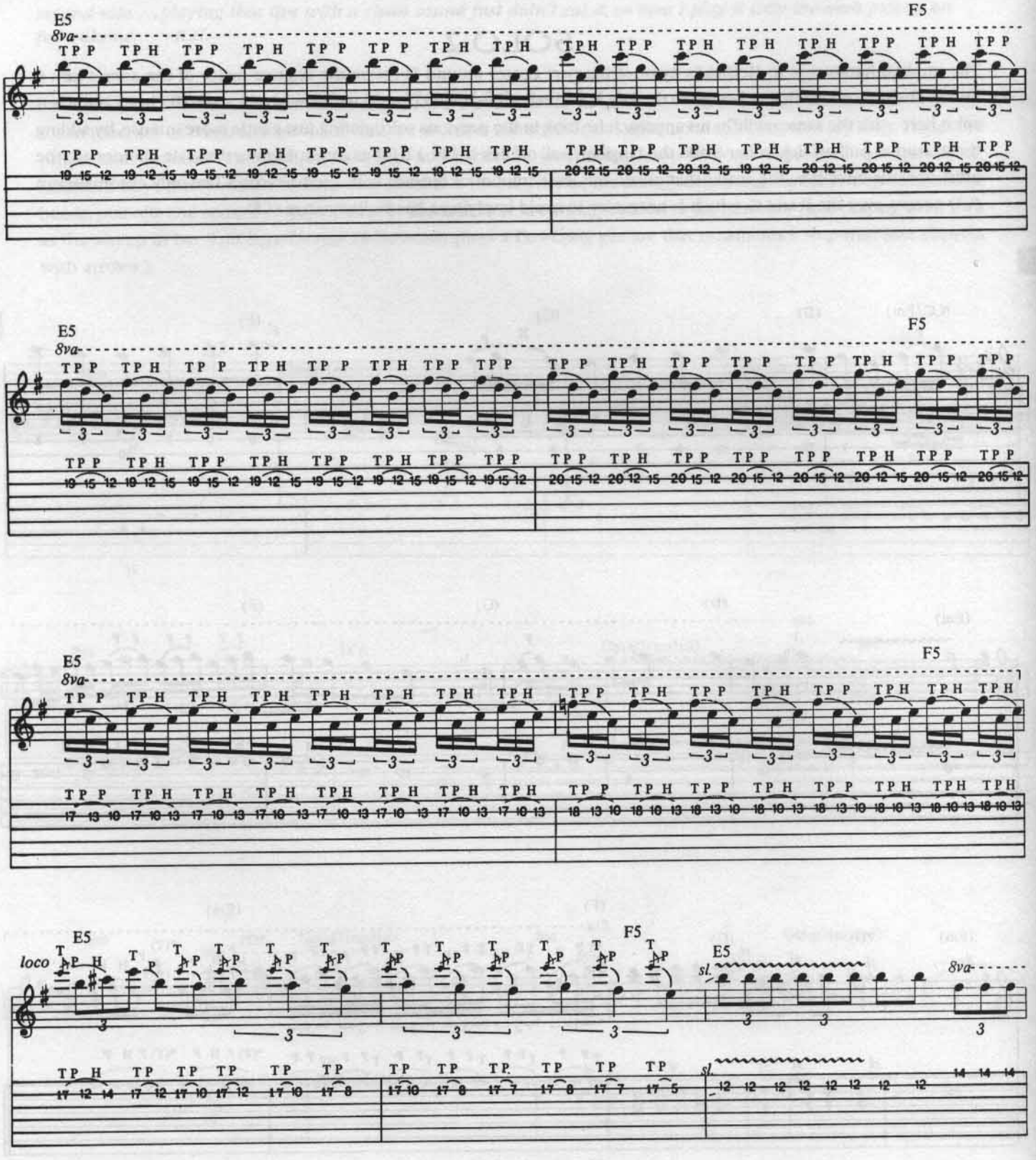
3:13

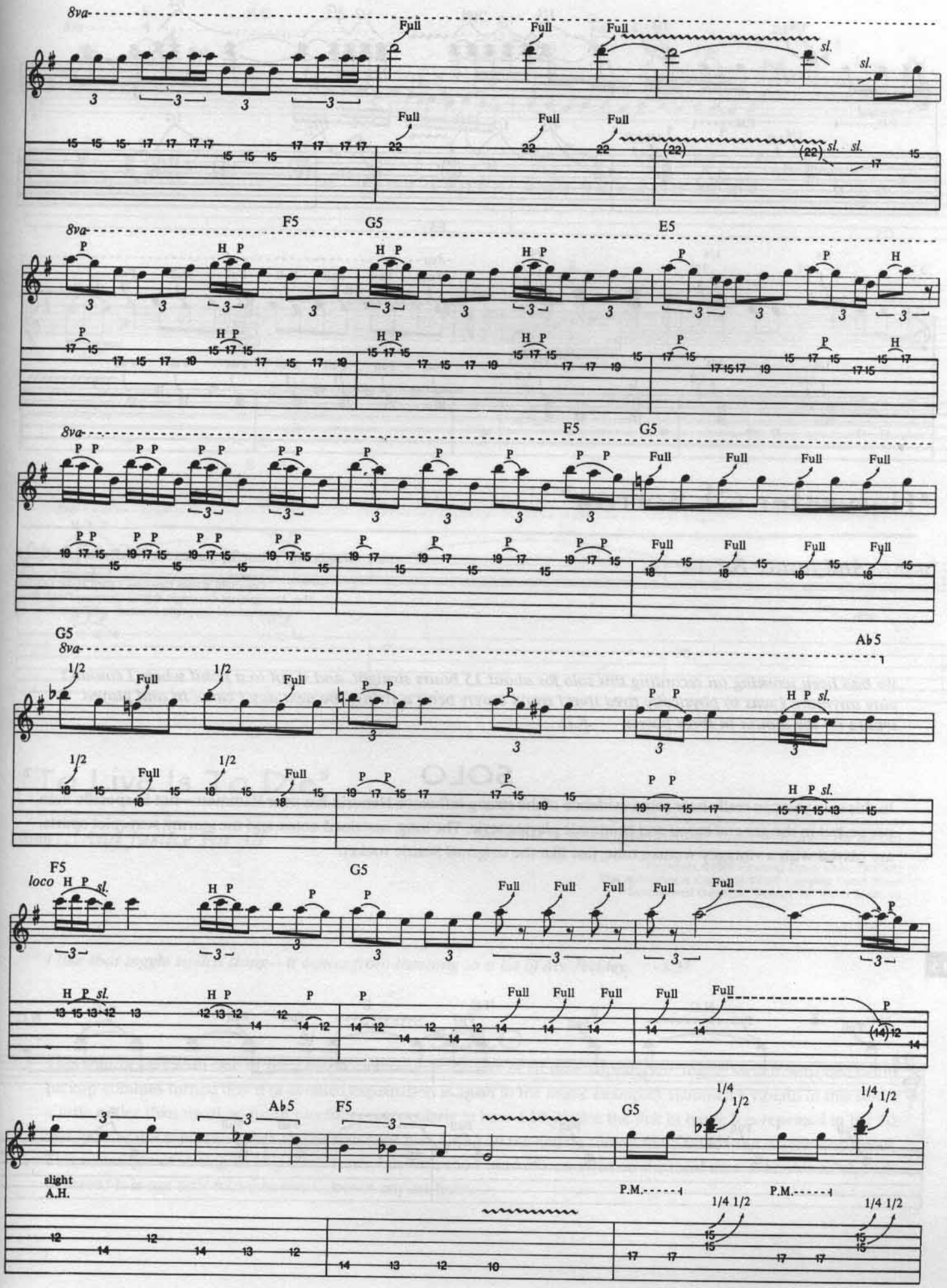


MAIN SOLO

If the land mine didn't take away your arms and soul, you may actually have a chance at playing this solo. The solo begins with an Eddie Van Halen–style tapping lick. Ostinato licks abound in this solo, many of which are based on tried-and-true classic-rock licks, especially the licks in bars 13-19. Probably the coolest thing about this solo is the way Hammett reinforces the band's hits with his powerhouse double-stop licks in bars 27-32.

5:45

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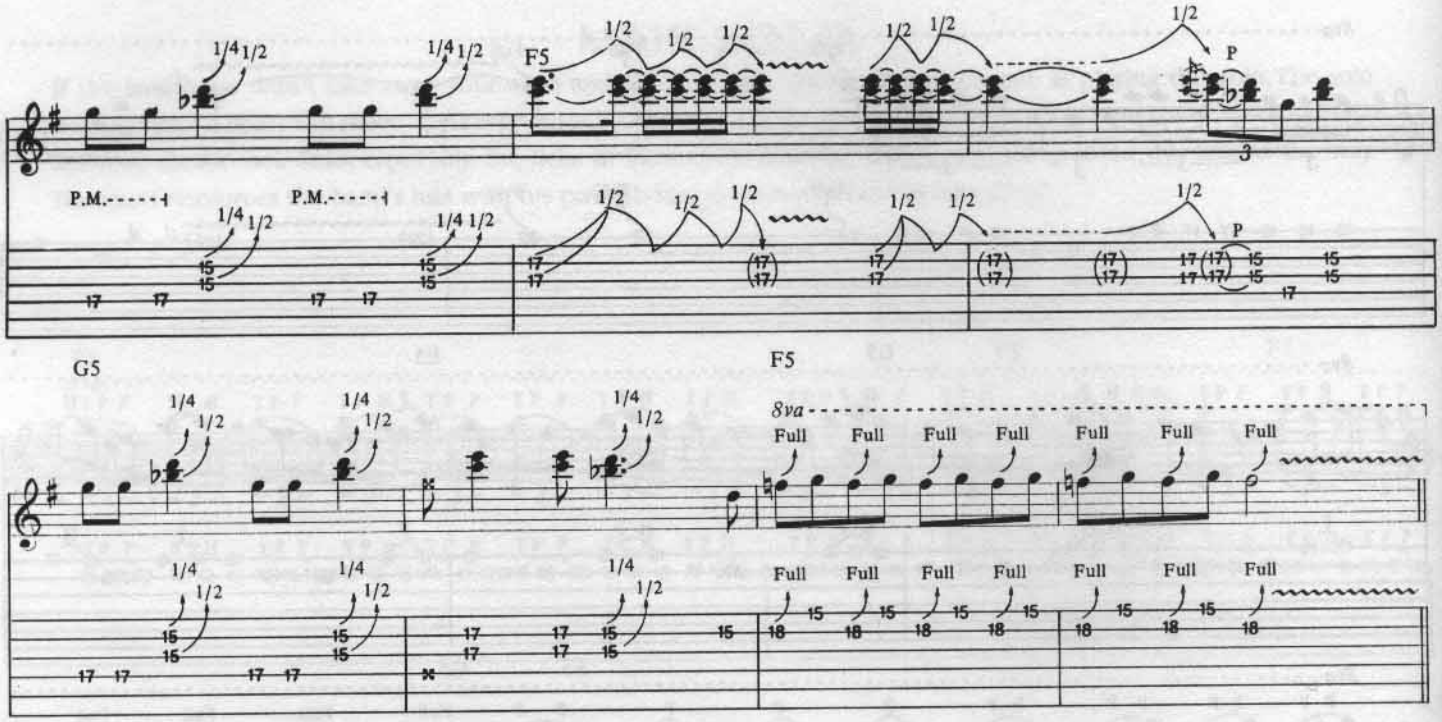

"Harvester Of Sorrow"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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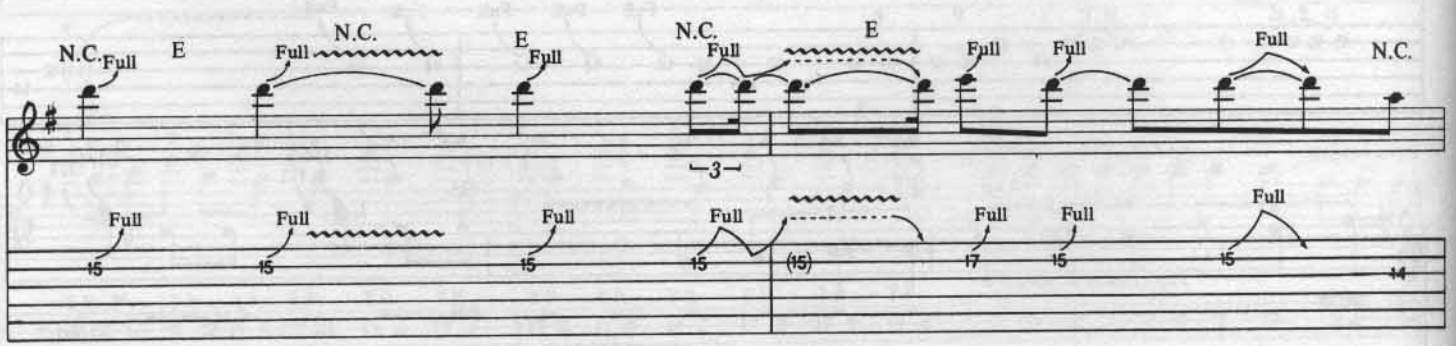
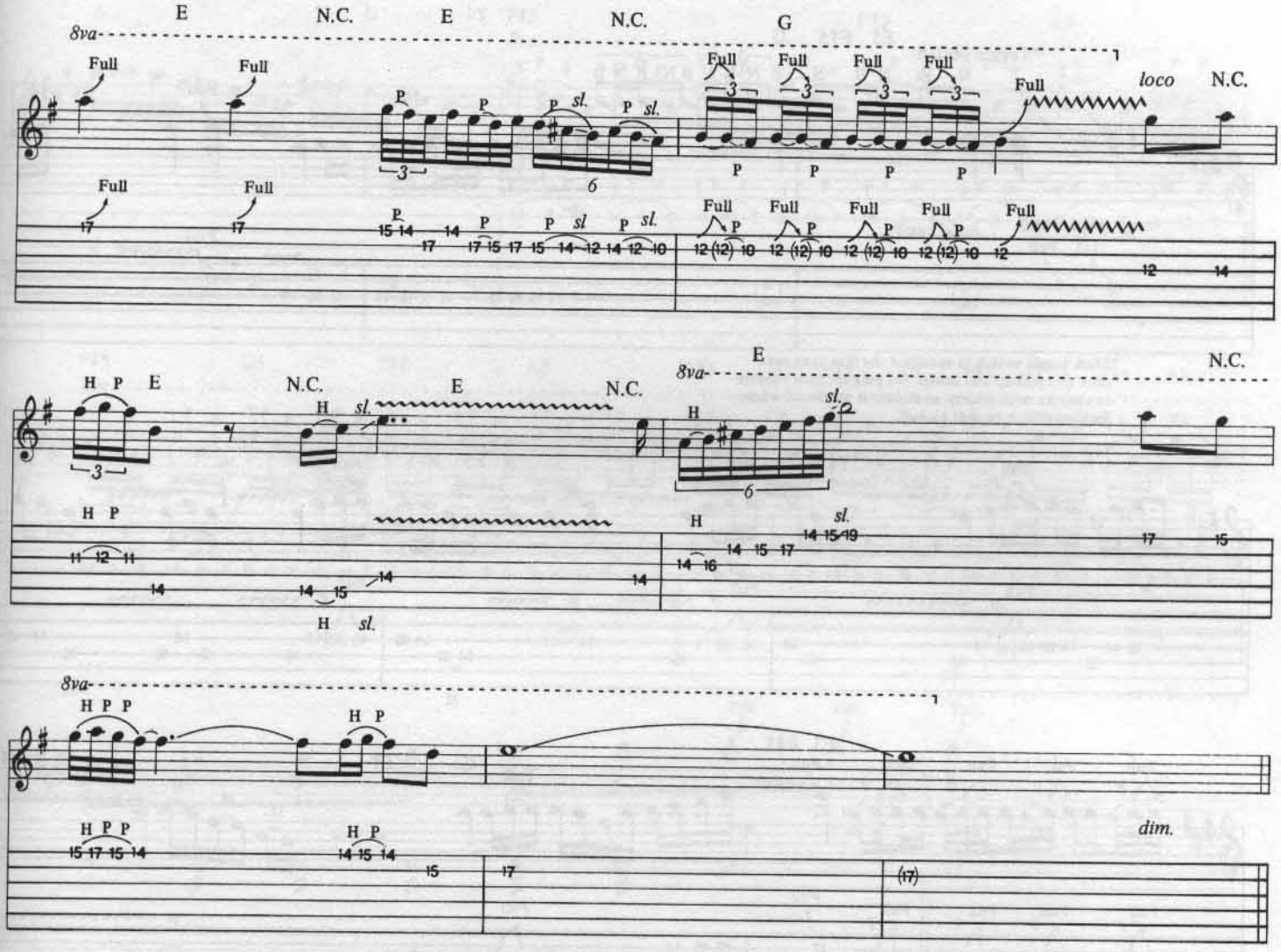
We had been working on recording this solo for about 15 hours straight, and it got to a point where I couldn't play anymore. I was so physically tired that I could barely bend a string. The next day I came in and played what's on the album in three passes. -K.H.

SOLO

In this solo you can really hear some evidence of the strong influence Hendrix has over Hammett—not in specific licks per se, but in the general mood and economic playing style. The long, sustained notes, and the stormy, sextuplet spurts, are played with a vintagey woman tone, just like the *original* Seattle rocker.

3:43





"To Live Is To Die"

from . . . *And Justice For All*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Cliff Burton

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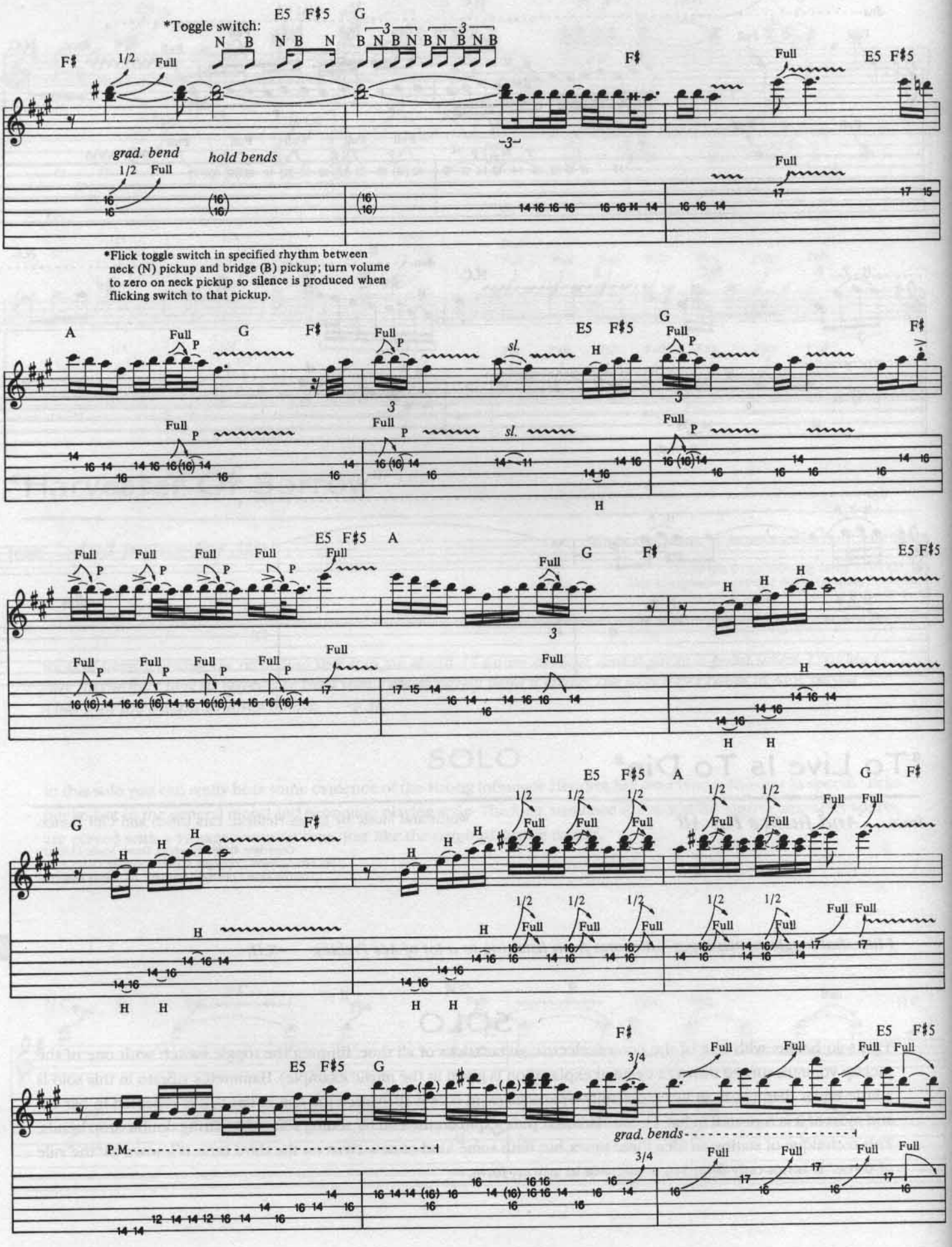
I like that toggle switch thing—it comes from listening to a lot of Ace Frehley. -K.H.

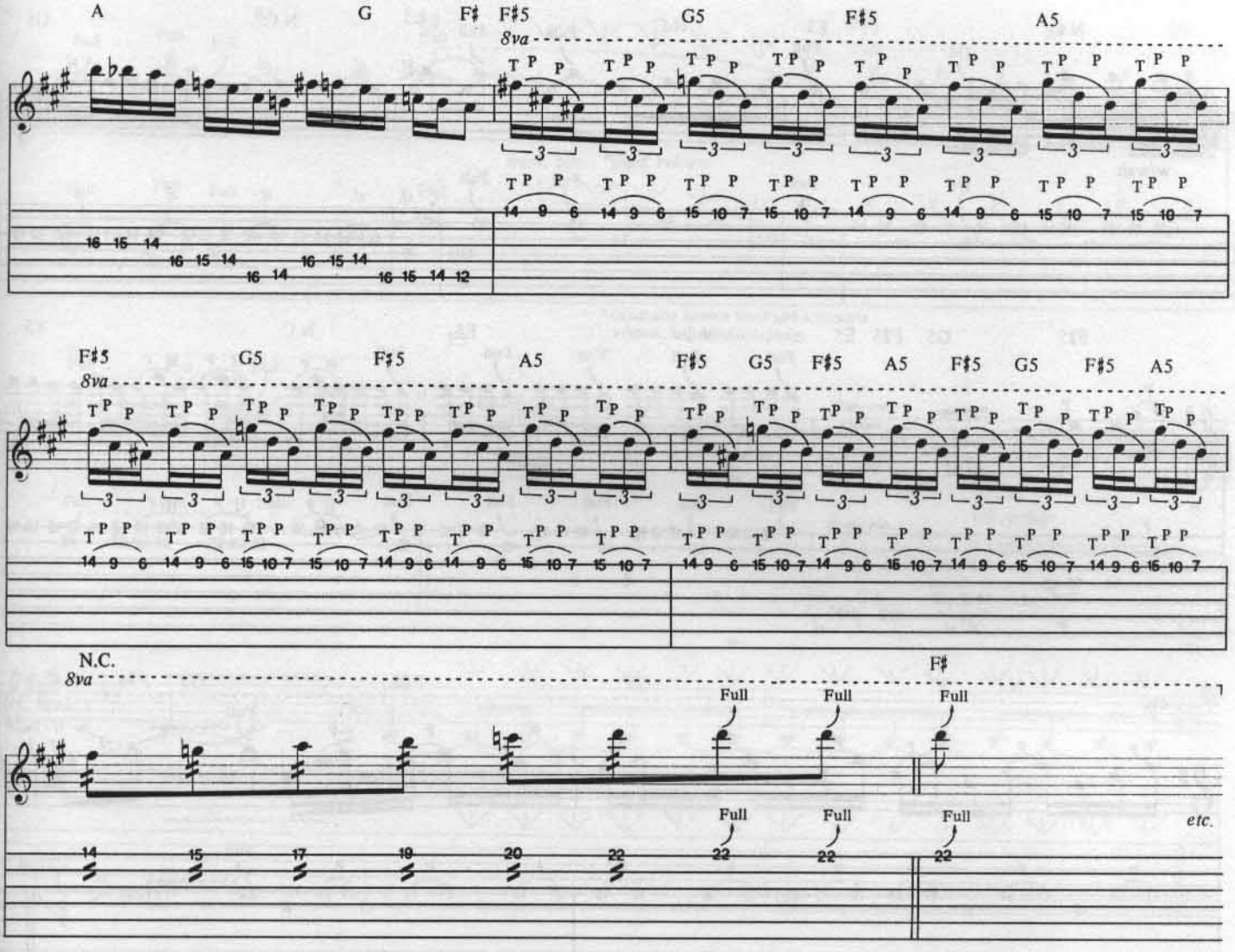
SOLO

This solo begins with one of the coolest electric guitar tricks of all time: flipping the toggle switch with one of the pickup volumes turned down (a detailed explanation is given in the music example). Hammett's vibrato in this solo is a little wider than usual, so listen carefully—particularly in bars 4-10. Notice the lick in bar 9; it is repeated in bar 10, and most of it is repeated in bar 11, but Hammett puts a spin on the end by adding some rip-roaring double-stop bends. This technique of stating an idea three times, but with some kind of new twist on the third time, is known as "the rule of three." It is not only found in music, but in any art form.

3:15



*Flick toggle switch in specified rhythm between neck (N) pickup and bridge (B) pickup; turn volume to zero on neck pickup so silence is produced when flicking switch to that pickup.



"Enter Sandman"

from *METALLICA*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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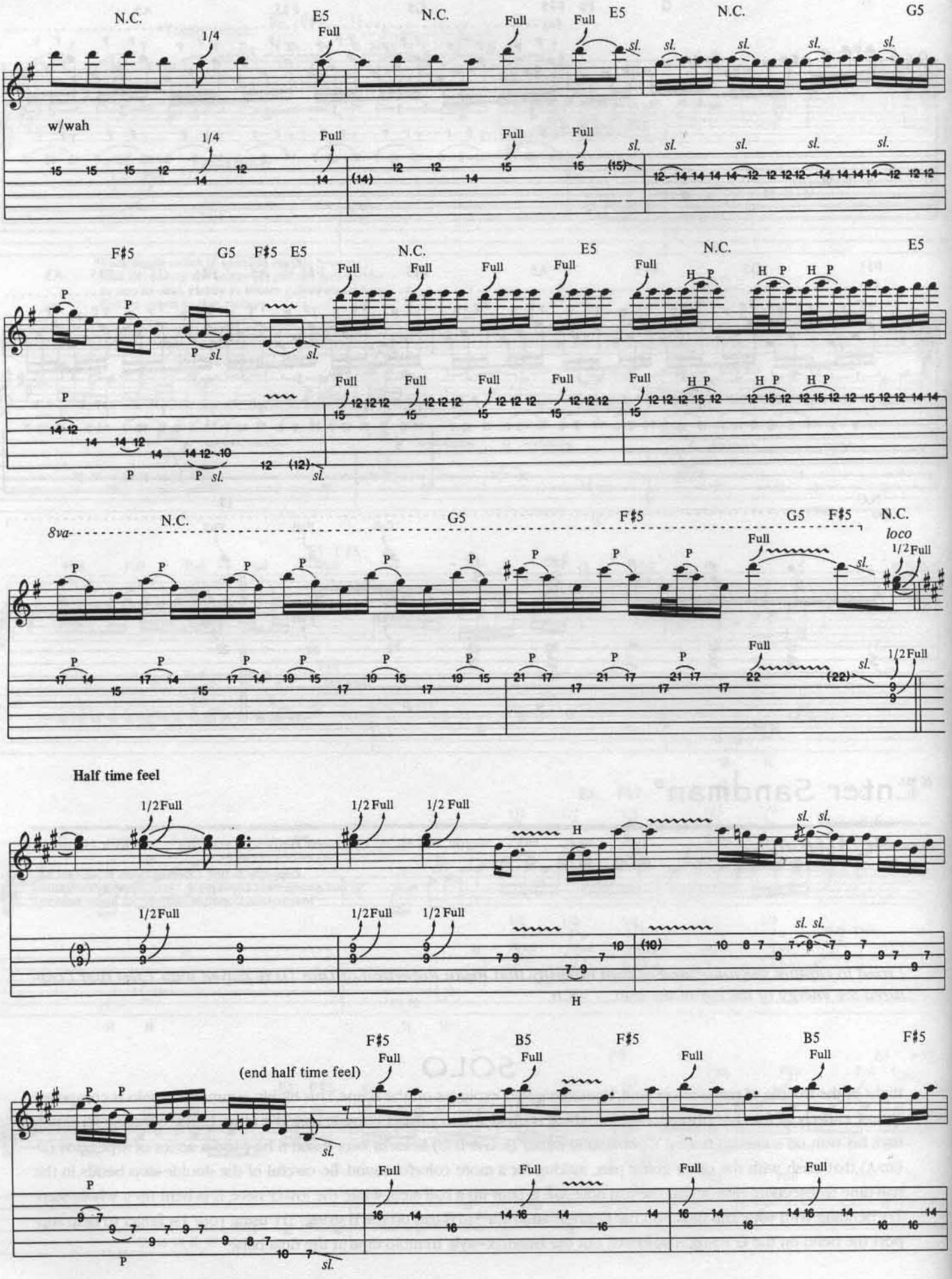
I tried to capture the same kind of wah intensity that Brian Robertson of Thin Lizzy played with. I feel that I captured the energy of the riff in the solo. -K.H.

SOLO

Right in the middle of never-never land, Hammett's solo explodes on the scene. This highly symmetrical solo is composed almost entirely of four-bar phrases, each of which is divided into smaller two-bar melodic ideas. In the opening, Hammett uses his wah on some aggressive E pentatonic minor (E G A B D) licks. In bars 7 and 8 he plays a series of arpeggios (D-Em-A) that clash with the other guitar part, making for a more colorful sound. Be careful of the double-stop bends in the half-time feel section. Notice that the top note, G♯, is bent up a half step, while the lower note, E, is bent up a whole step. Try bending with your 2nd finger on the G string, and your 3rd finger on the B string. Try using your 1st finger to help support the bend on the G string. Also check out the Hendrix-style tremolo dips in the final bars.

2:41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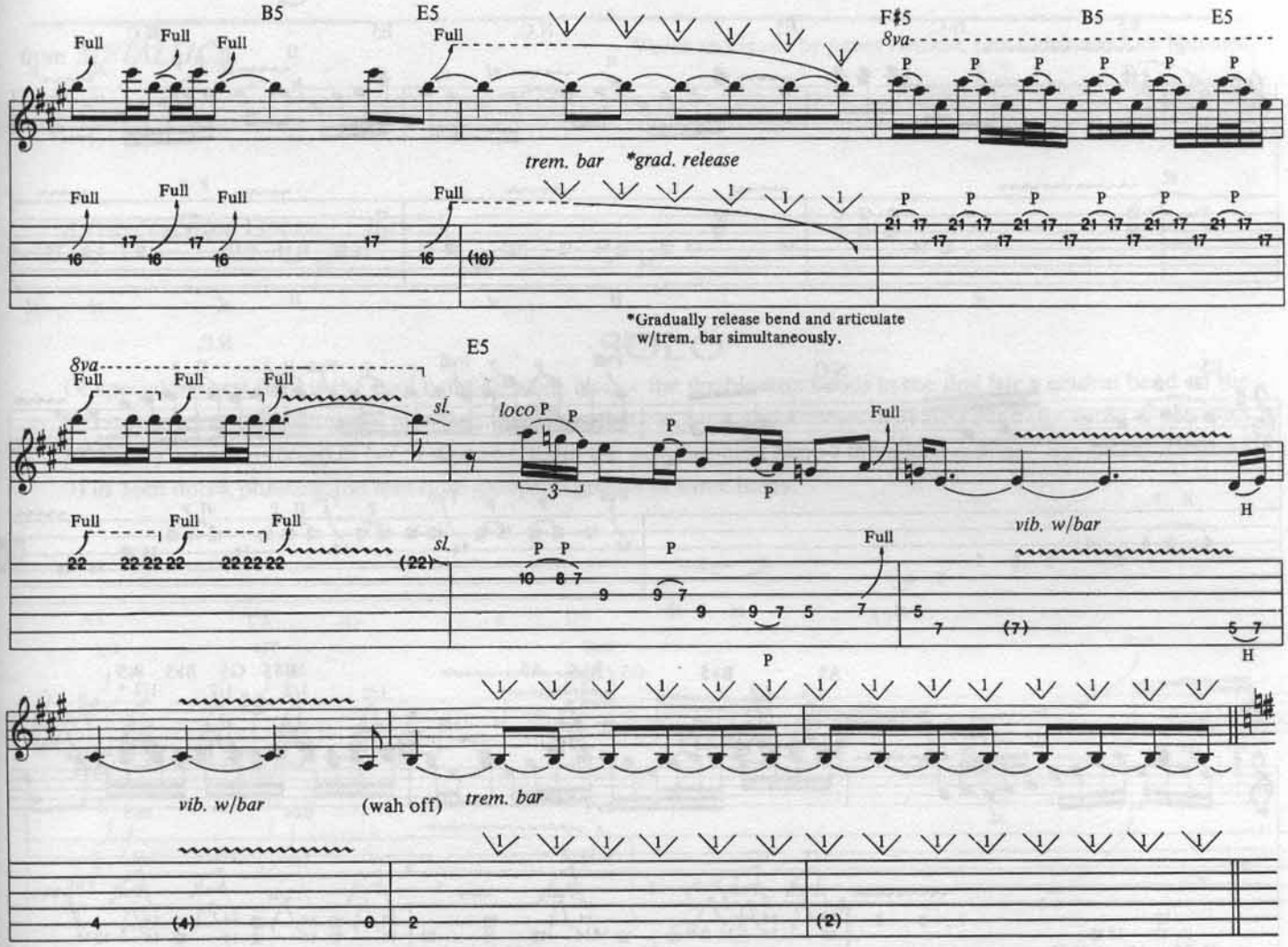
F♯5
B5
F♯5



"Sad But True"

from *METALLICA*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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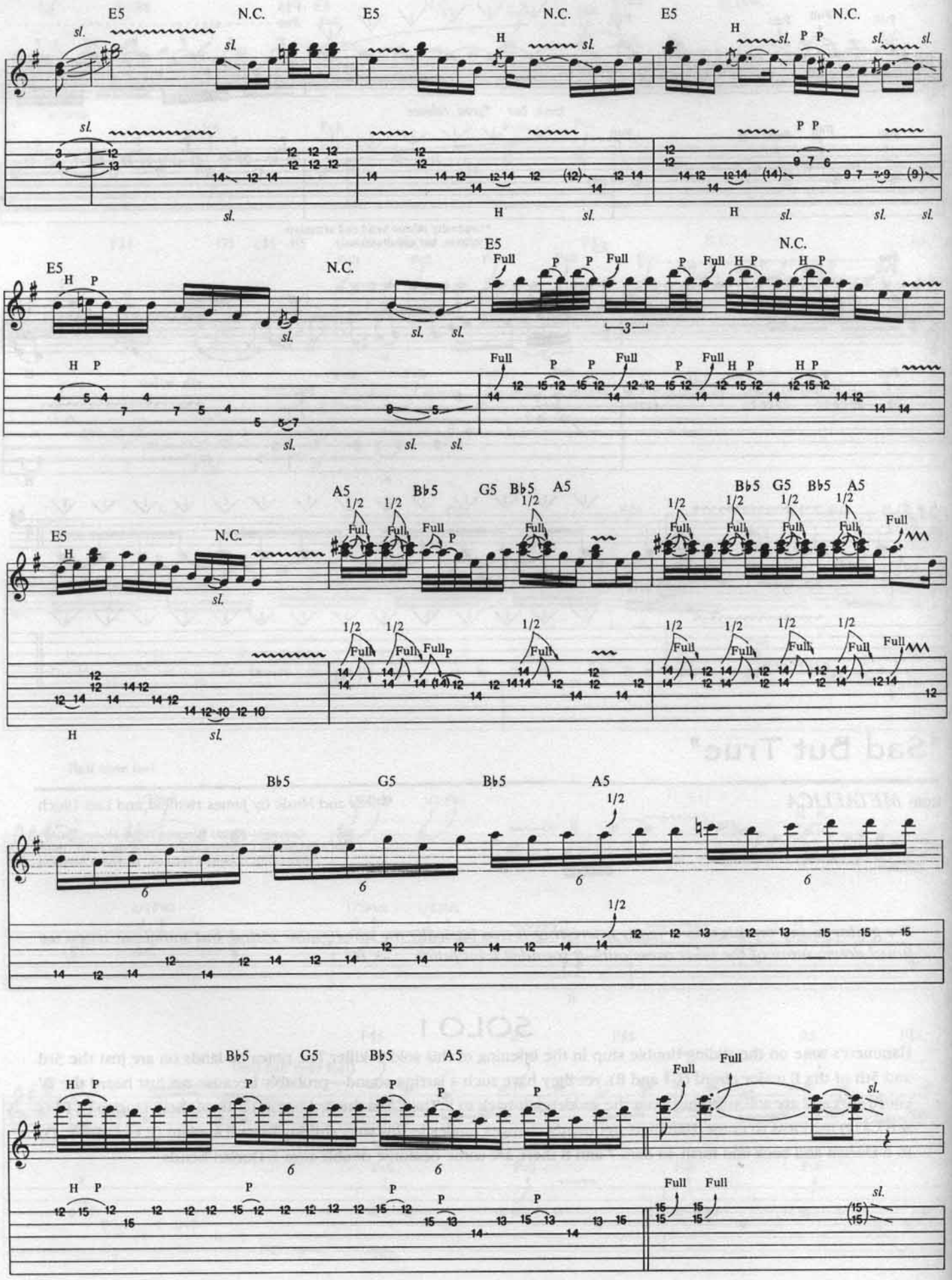
The guitar sound on this solo is really interesting. It was basically the same guitar sound, but somehow, when we tuned down, more of the mids came out—it sounded a lot fatter. -K.H.

SOLO 1

Hammett's tone on the sliding double stop in the opening of this solo is killer. The notes he lands on are just the 3rd and 5th of the E major chord (G♯ and B), yet they have such a jarring sound—probably because we just heard the fV chord (B♭) and are still suffering from the sudden jolt back to E. The C♯ in the 3rd bar is a hint of the E Dorian (E F♯ G A B C♯ D) madness to come. Hammett frequently changes modes in this solo, shifting from E Aeolian (E F♯ G A B C D) to E Dorian and back and forth. In bars 7 and 8 there are some demonic double-stop E Dorian bends.

3:10



"The Unforgiven"

from *METALLICA*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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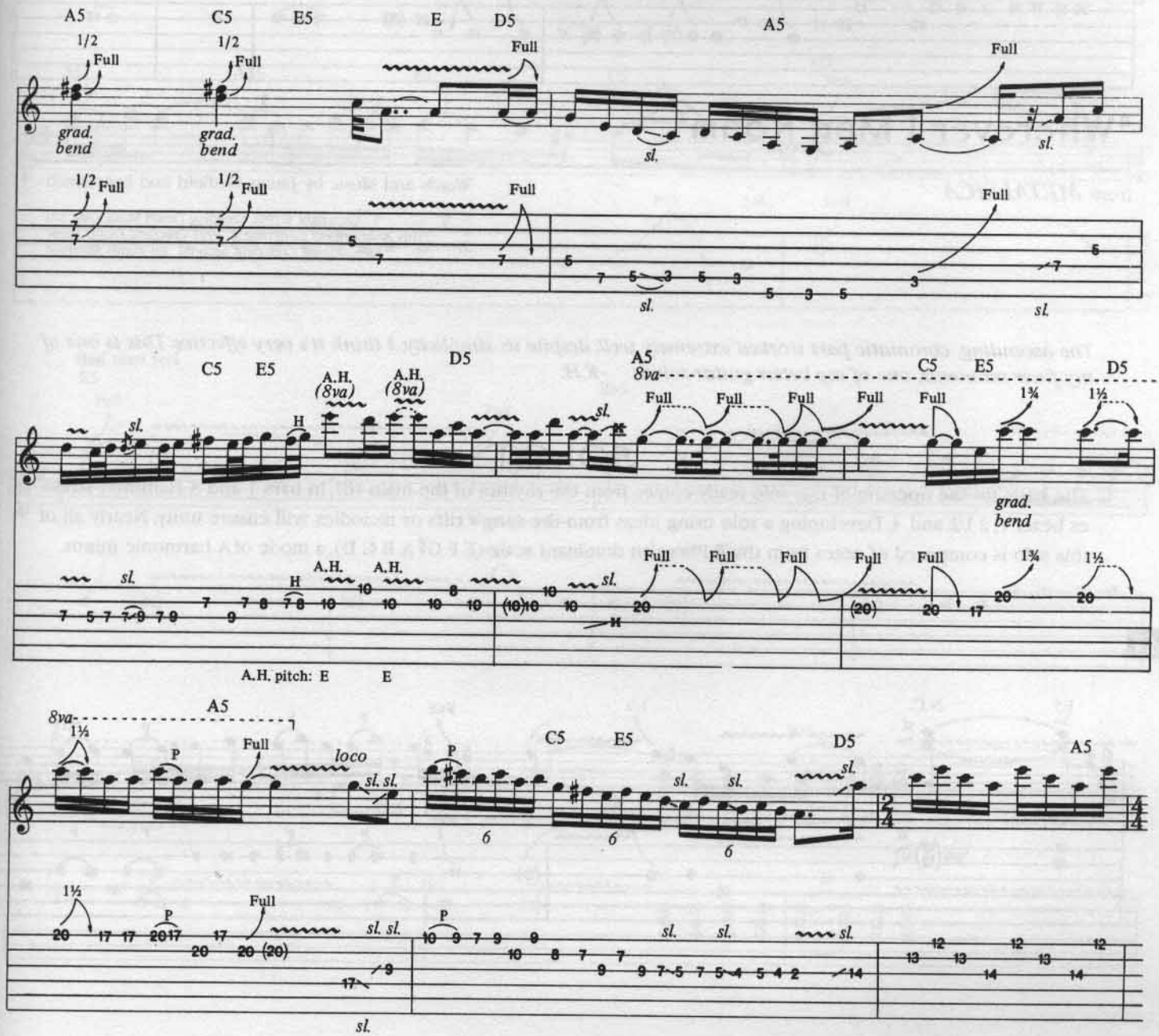
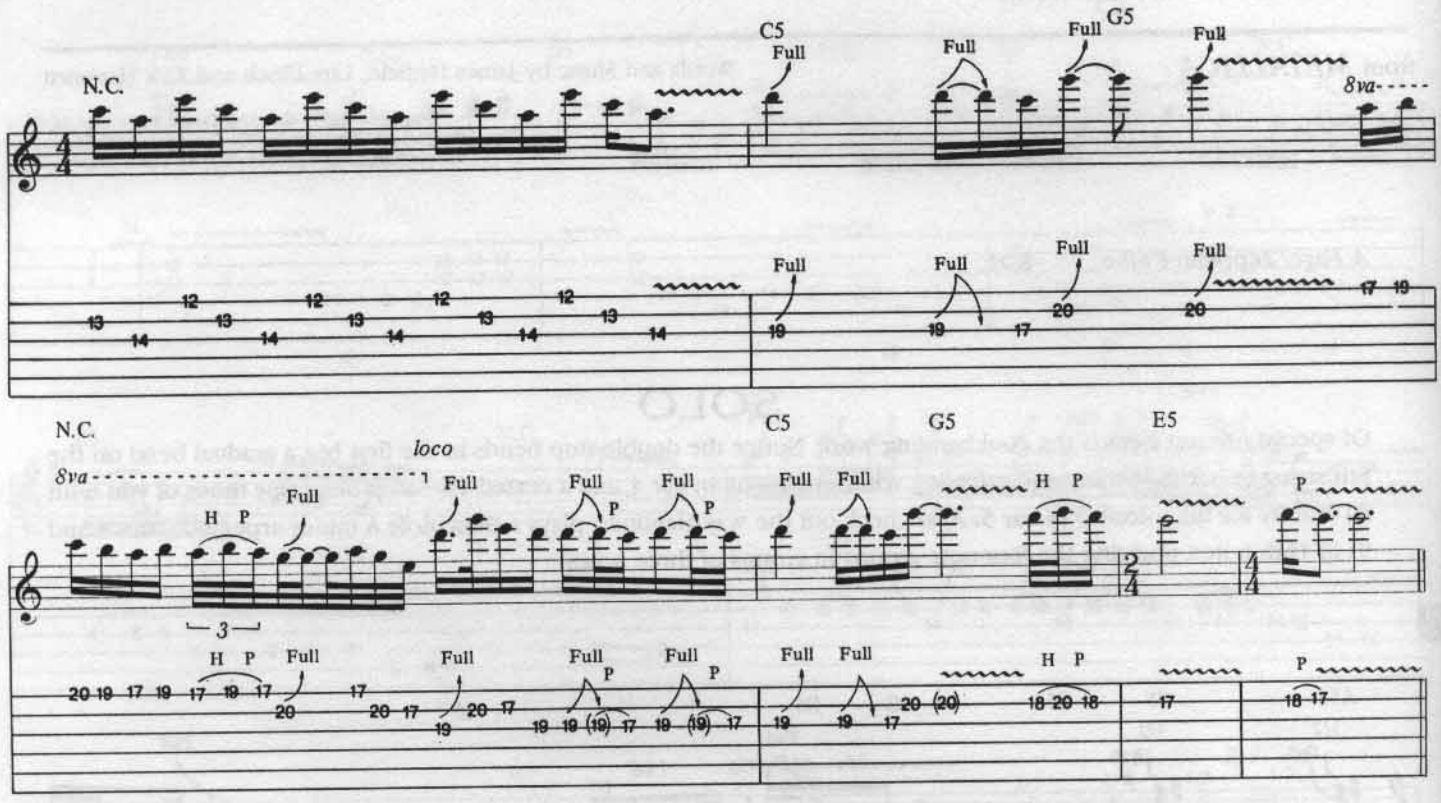
*A Page/*Zeppelin I *vibe...* -K.H.

SOLO

Of special interest here is the cool bending work. Notice the double-stop bends in the first bar, a gradual bend on the 5th string in bar 2, bending and releasing without striking in bar 4, and a crazed 1 3/4-step bend (for those of you with an affinity for microtones) in bar 5. Also check out the way Hammett plays a three-note A minor arpeggio (bars 8 and 9) in 16th notes, phrasing the four-note groups in groups of three notes.

3:47





"Wherever I May Roam"

from *METALLICA*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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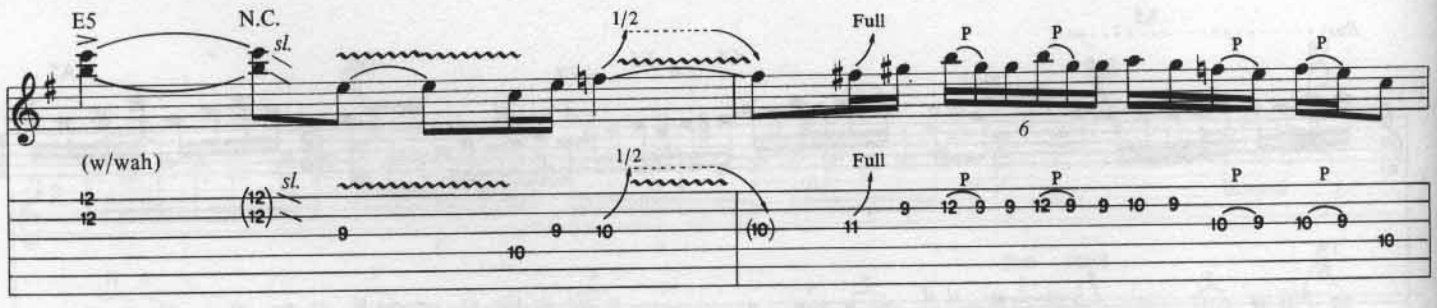
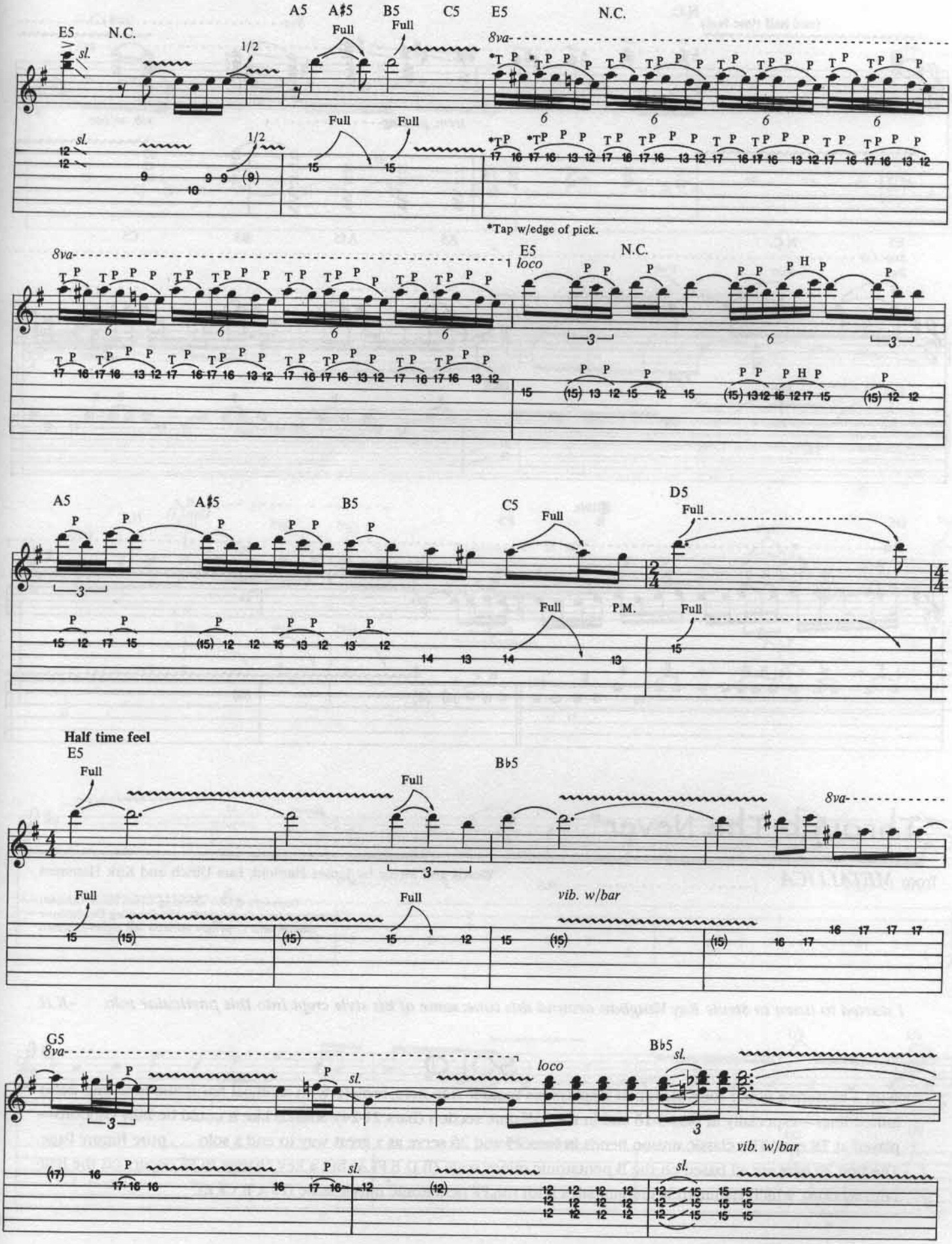
The ascending, chromatic part worked extremely well; despite its simplicity, I think it's very effective. This is one of my finer moments, one of my better guitar solos. -K.H.

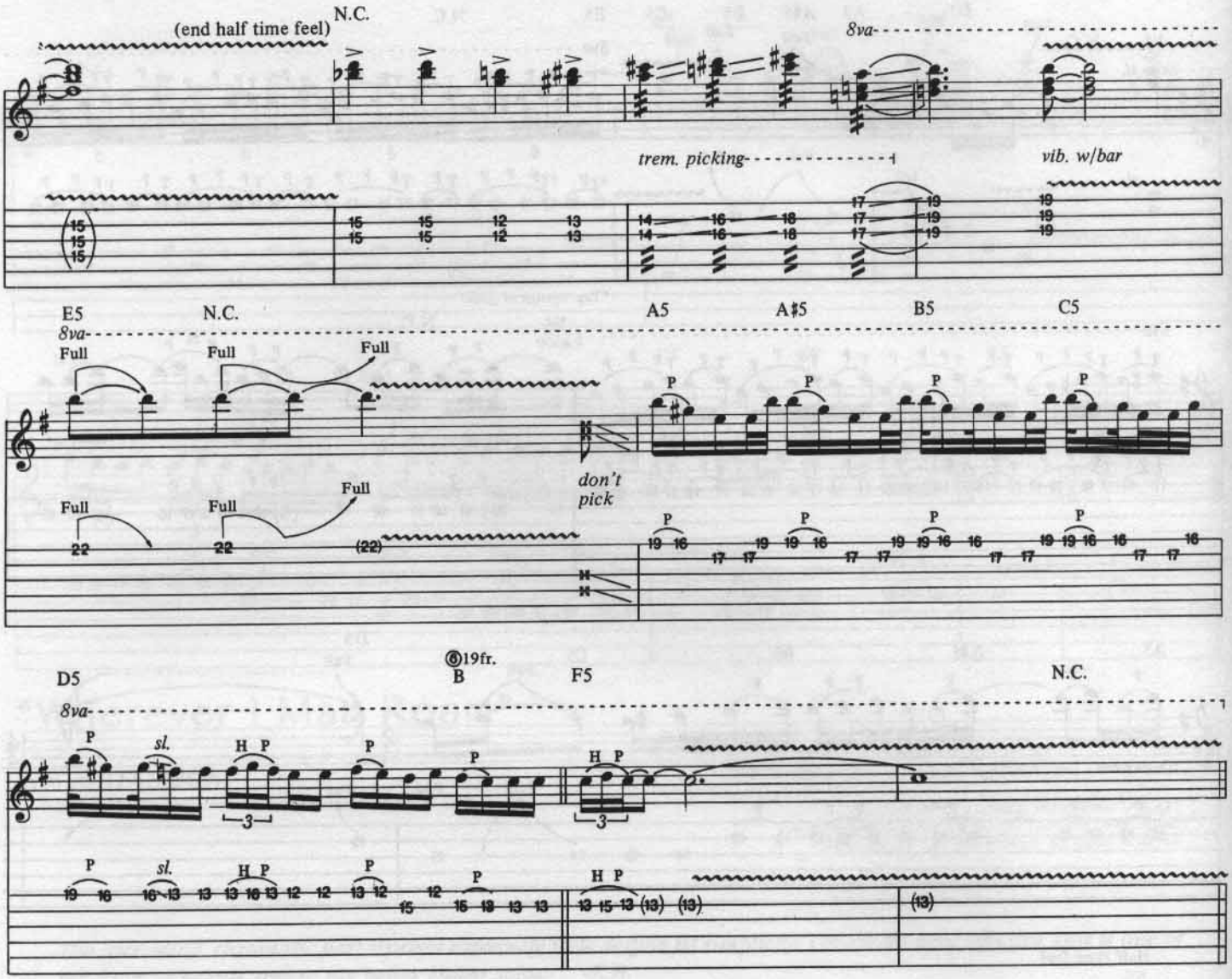
SOLO 1

The basis for the opening of this solo really comes from the rhythm of the main riff. In bars 1 and 3 Hammett stresses beats 1, 2 1/2, and 4. Developing a solo using ideas from the song's riffs or melodies will ensure unity. Nearly all of this solo is composed of notes from the E Phrygian dominant scale (E F G♯ A B C D), a mode of A harmonic minor.

4:14




A5 A♯5 B5 C5 E5 N.C.
E5 N.C.
Full Full
8va
sl. 1/2
Full Full
*Tap w/edge of pick.
8va
1 loco
E5 N.C.
A5 A♯5 B5 C5 D5
Full
P.M.
Half time feel
E5
B♭5
vib. w/bar
G5
8va
loco
B♭5 sl.
vib. w/bar



"Through The Never"

from *METALLICA*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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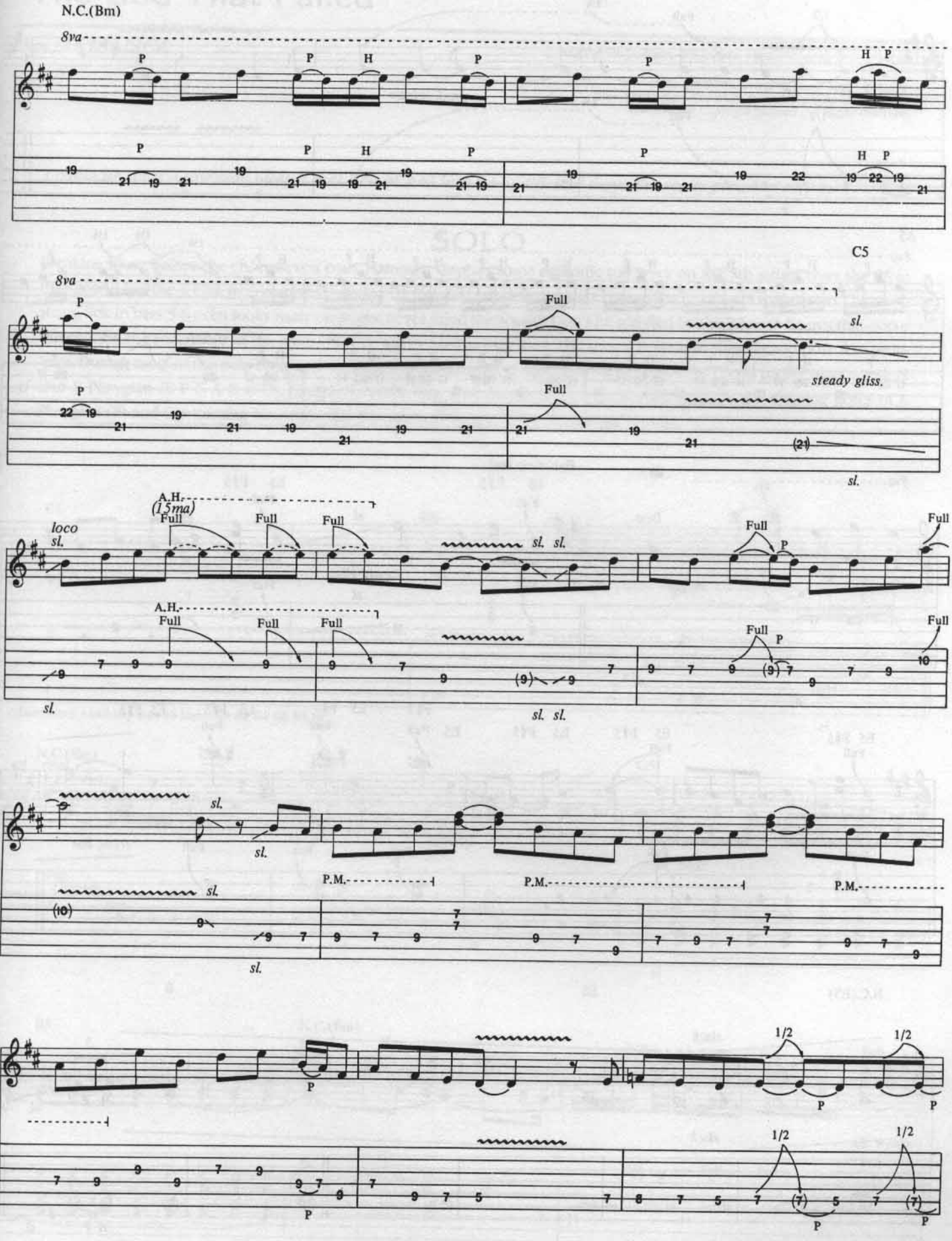
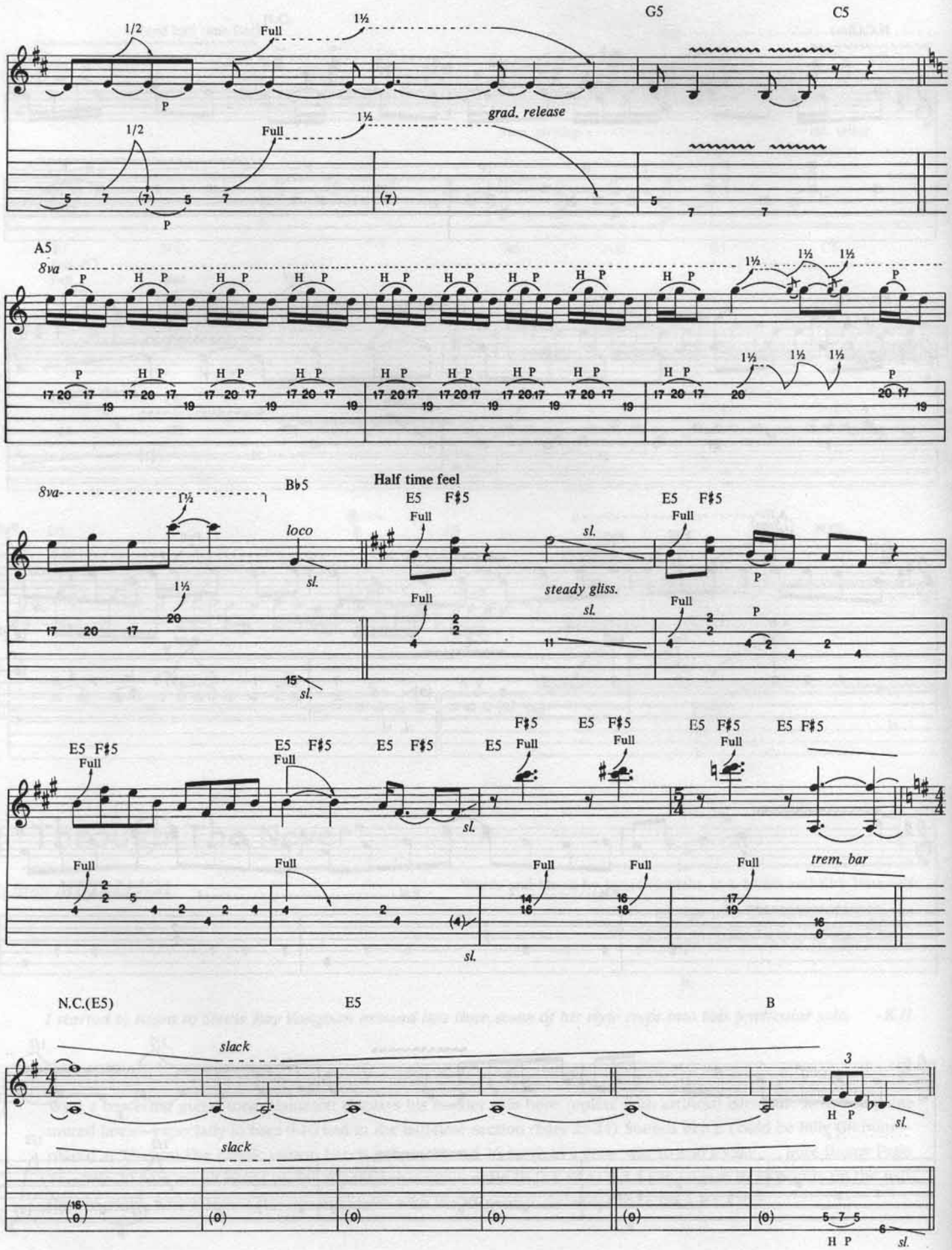
I started to listen to Stevie Ray Vaughan around this time; some of his style crept into this particular solo. *-K.H.*

SOLO

With a blistering guitar tone, Hammett displays his funkier side here, replete with artificial harmonic licks and palm-muted lines—especially in bars 9-16 and in the half-time section (bars 21-24). Sounds like it could be Billy Gibbons—played at 78 rpm! The classic unison bends in bars 25 and 26 serve as a great way to end a solo . . . pure Jimmy Page. The first 20 bars are all based on the B pentatonic minor scale (B D E F♯ A) but a key change to F♯ occurs (at the half-time section), which Hammett accommodates with the F♯ pentatonic minor scale (F♯ A B C♯ E).

2:14




G5
C5
1/2
Full
1½
P
grad. release
A5
8va
H P
Bb5
Half time feel
E5 F♯5
loco
sl.
steady gliss.
trem. bar
N.C.(E5)
E5
B
slack
3

"The God That Failed"

from *METALLICA*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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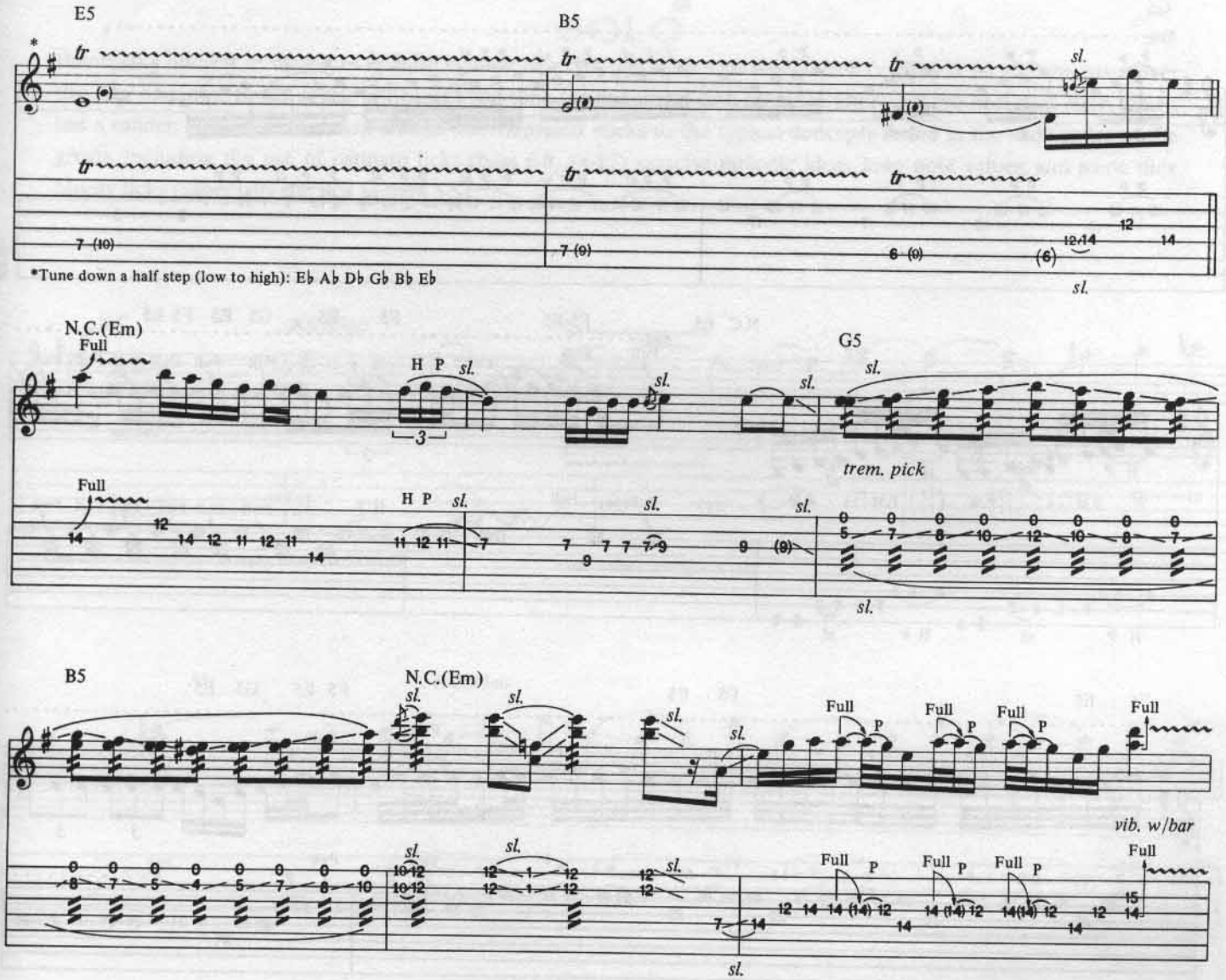
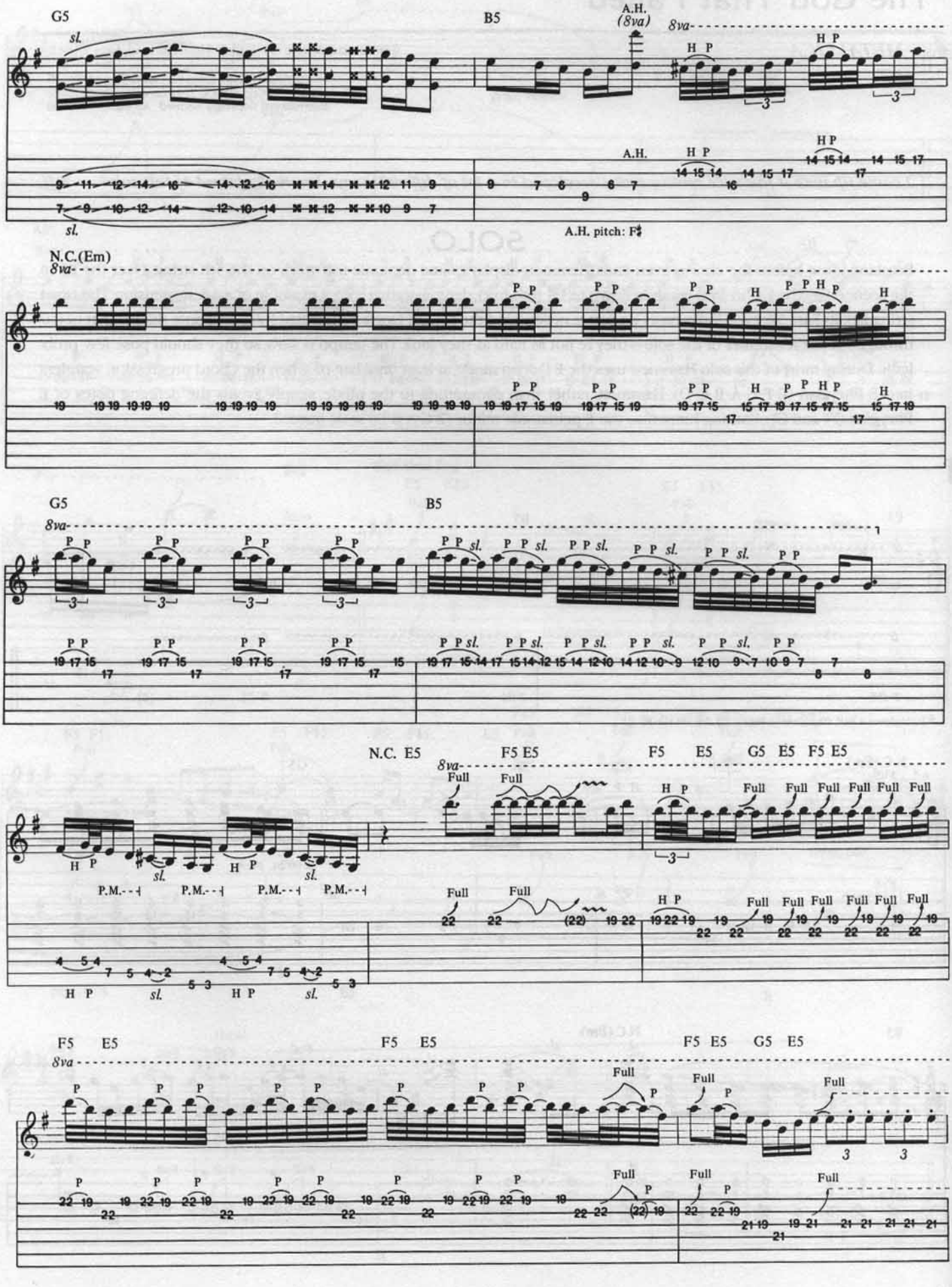
I came up with a five-note motive that I developed in a lot of different ways. I'm really proud of this solo. -K.H.

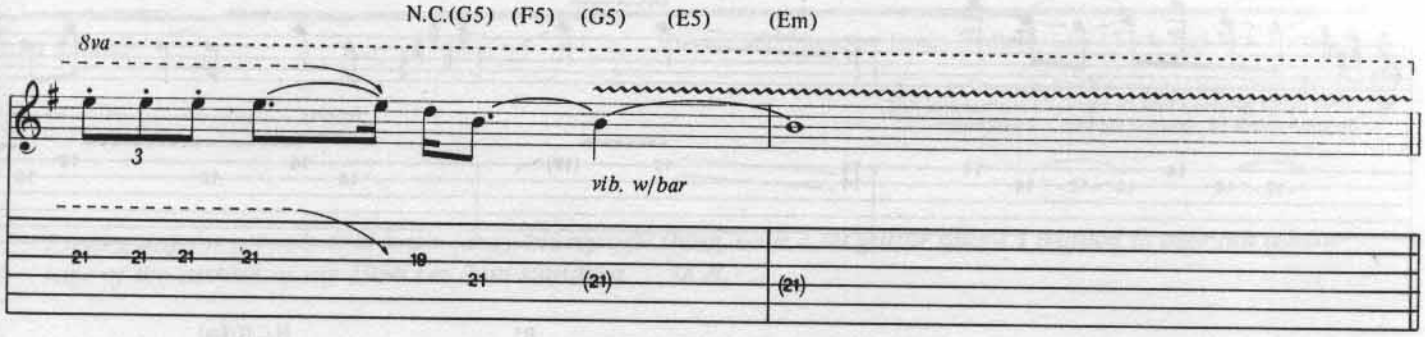
SOLO

Breaking loose before the chorus even ends, Hammett displays some demonic trill work on the 5th string. Over the B5 in the second bar, the E (7th fret) resolves down to D♯ (6th fret), demonstrating a cool example of a 4-3 suspension. The open string lick in bars 5-6 even looks nasty on paper, never mind the sound! Don't be terrified by the 32-note figures that occur throughout the remainder of the solo—they're not as hard as they look. The tempo is slow, so they should pose few problems. During most of this solo Hammett uses the E Dorian mode, at least until bar 16 when the chord progression wanders into E Phrygian (E F G A B C D). Hammett, rather than committing to the mode, simply avoids the defining notes of E Phrygian (F♮ and C♮), limiting himself to the E pentatonic minor (E G A B D) scale instead.

2:38




G5
B5
A.H.
(8va)
8va
sl.
A.H.
A.H. pitch: F♯
N.C.(Em)
8va
G5
B5
8va
N.C. E5
F5 E5
F5 E5
G5 E5 F5 E5
8va
Full
P.M.
F5 E5
F5 E5
F5 E5 G5 E5
8va
Full



"Ain't My Bitch"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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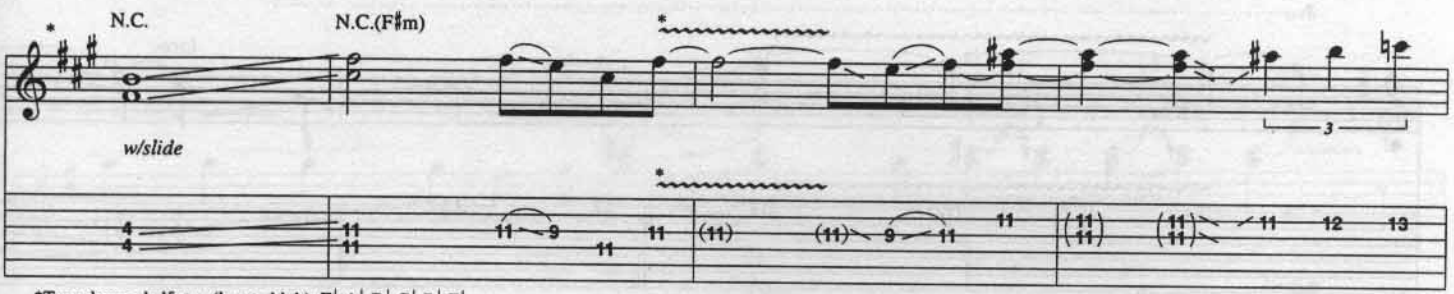
The first slide solo that I ever put on an album. I used a brass slide on a 1961 Les Paul Junior. *-K.H.*

SOLO

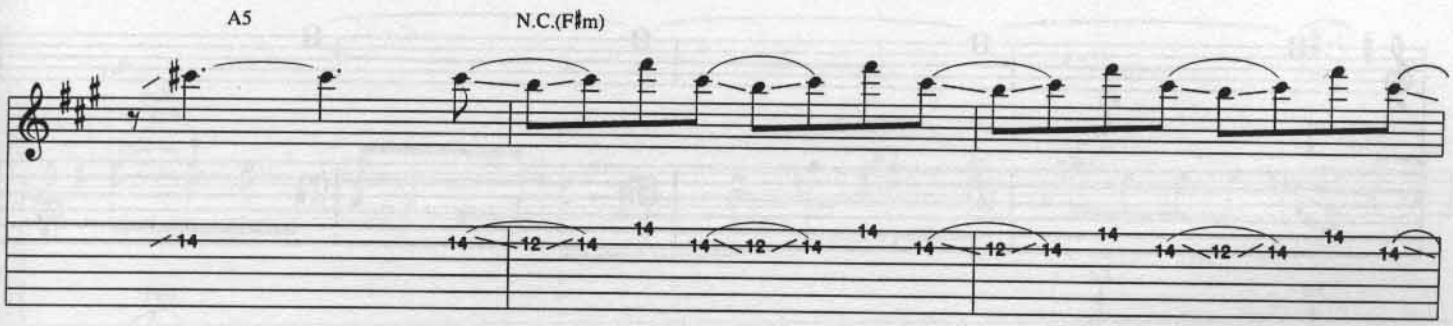
Hammett's interest in the blues is quite evident here. He plays this solo with a slide (a glass or metal tube worn over the ring or pinkie finger of the left hand.) The tone quality of this solo seems to imply the use of a glass slide, which has a milder, less edgy tone than a steel one. Hammett sticks to the typical concepts found in the slide styles of the greats, including the use of ostinato licks (bars 6-8, 14-17), concise melodic ideas, long note values, and some nice bluesy licks (especially the lick in bars 3-5).

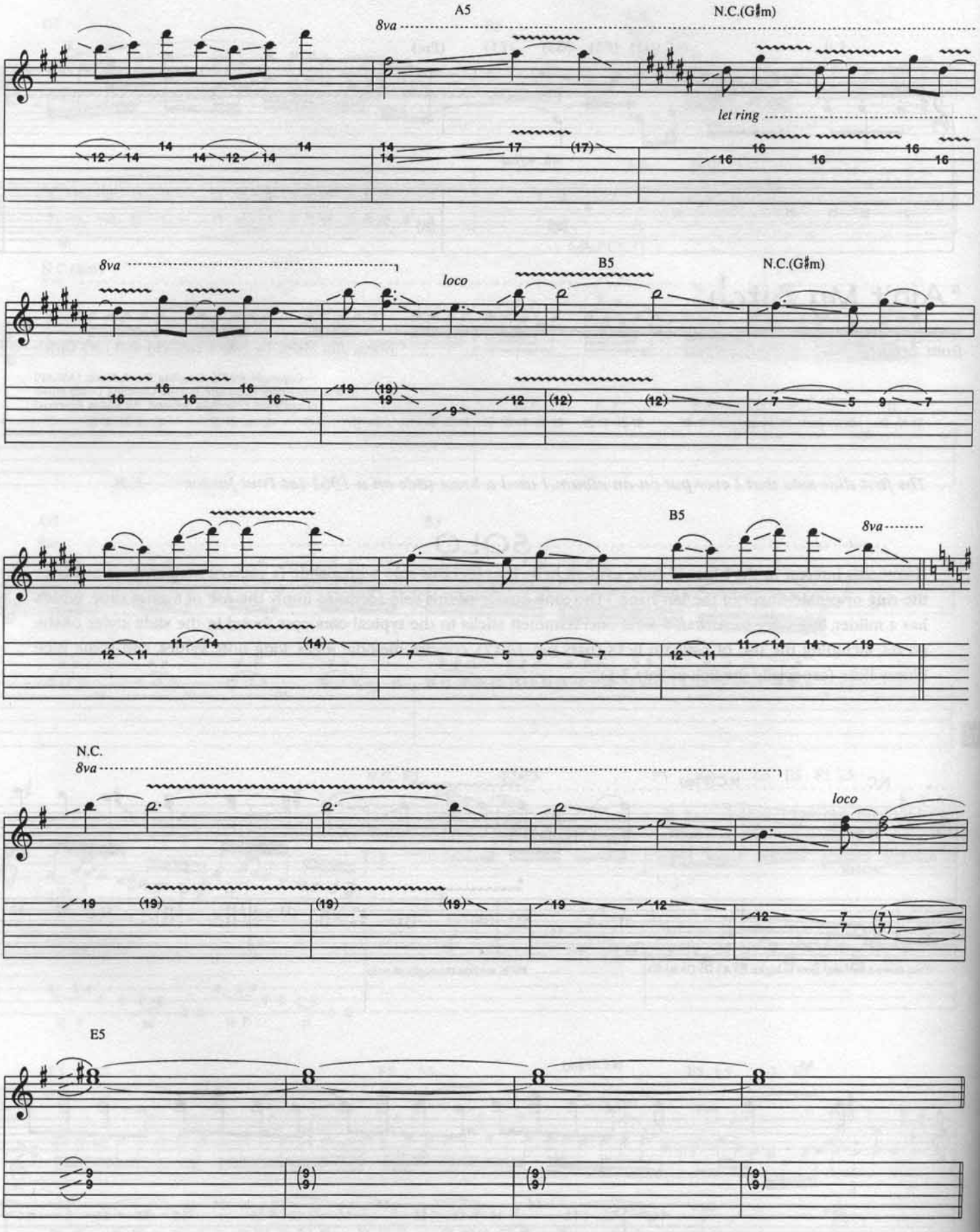
2:42



*Tune down a half step (low to high): E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭

*Vib. w/slide throughout solo.




A5
N.C.(G♯m)
8va
let ring
8va
loco
B5
N.C.(G♯m)
B5
8va
N.C.
8va
loco
E5

"2 x 4"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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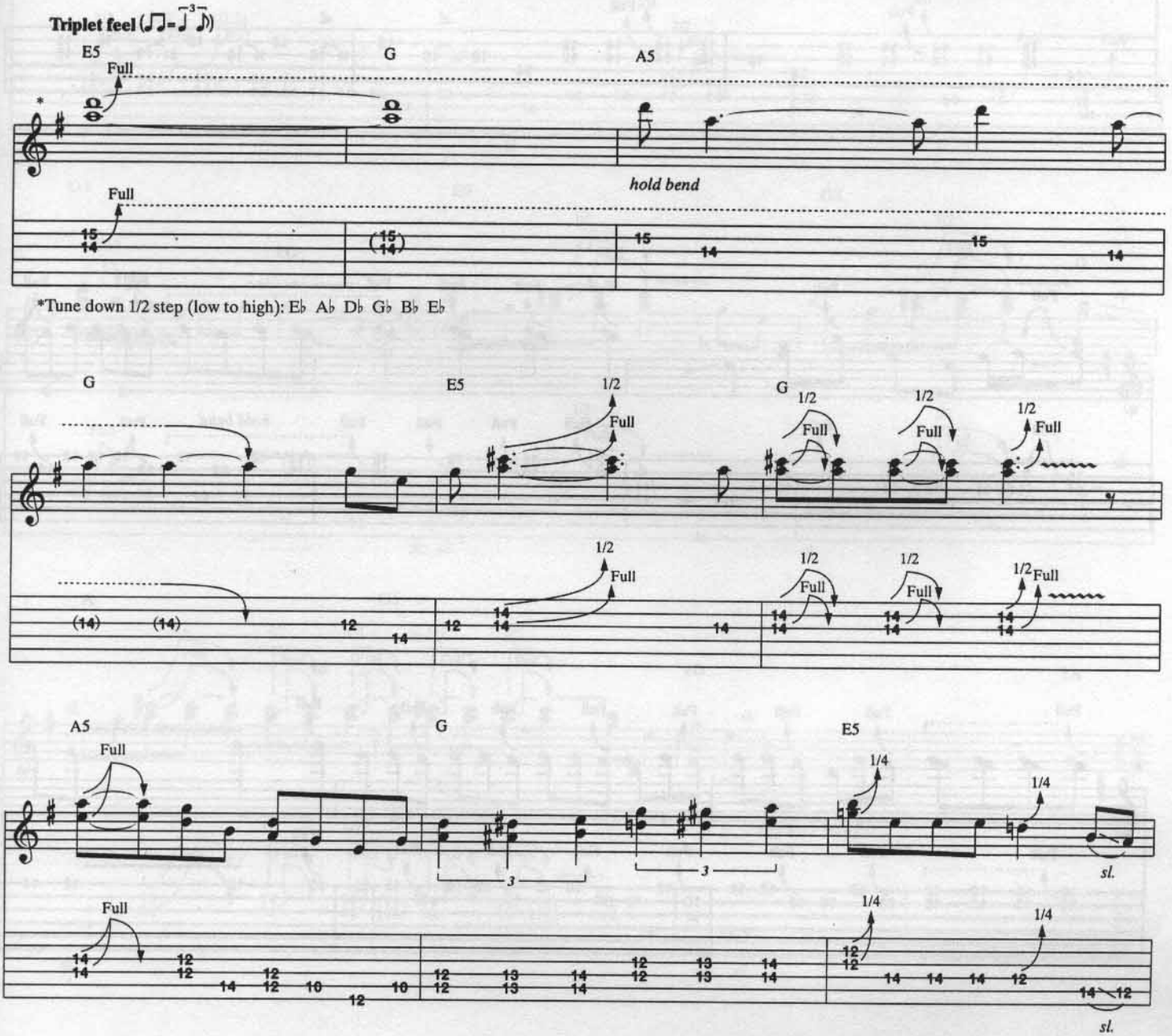
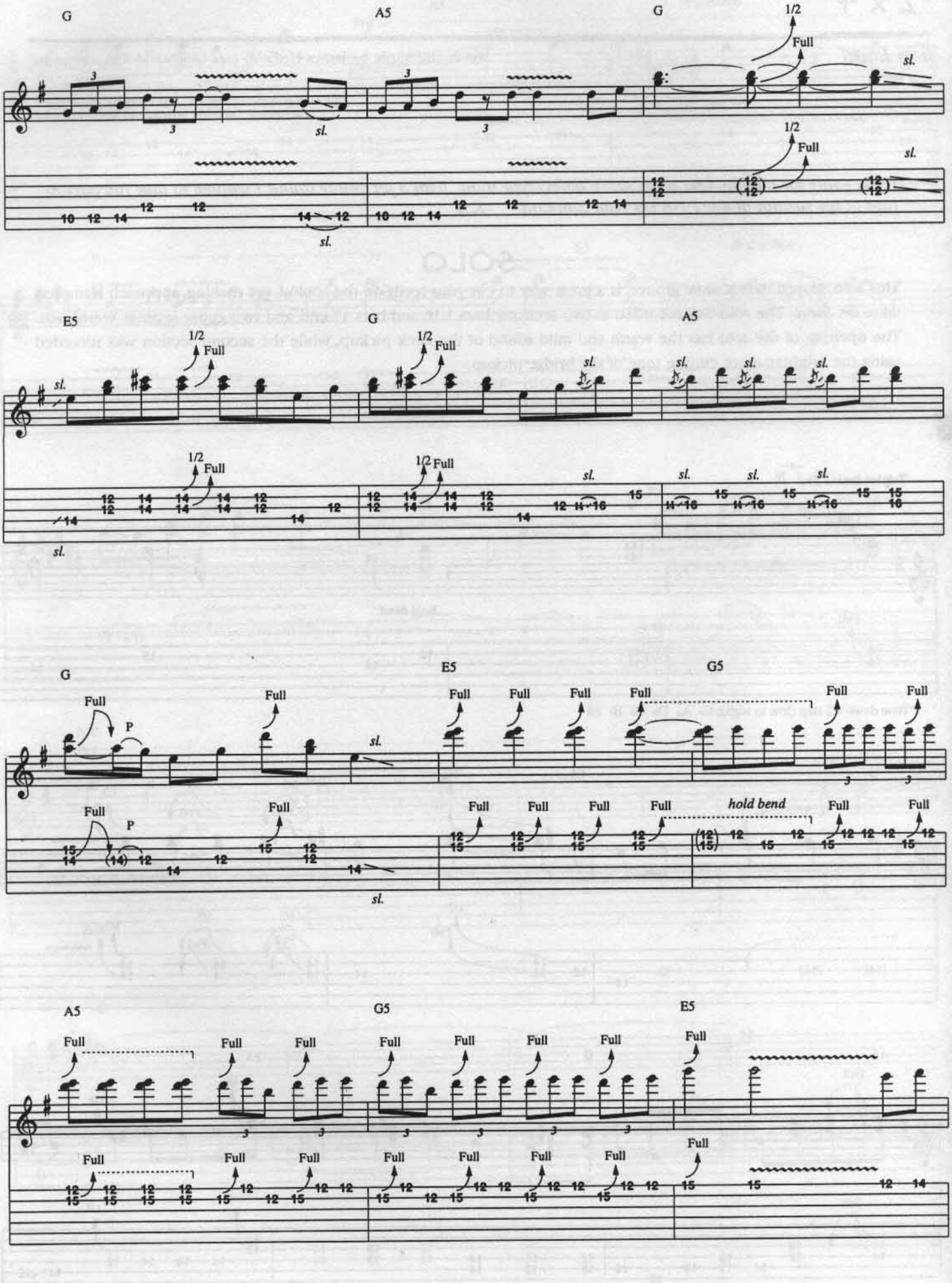
I was going for a really laid back, jazzy, bluesy-type thing, with a fat guitar sound. I wanted to take full advantage of the sustain of my 1958 Les Paul standard. -K.H.

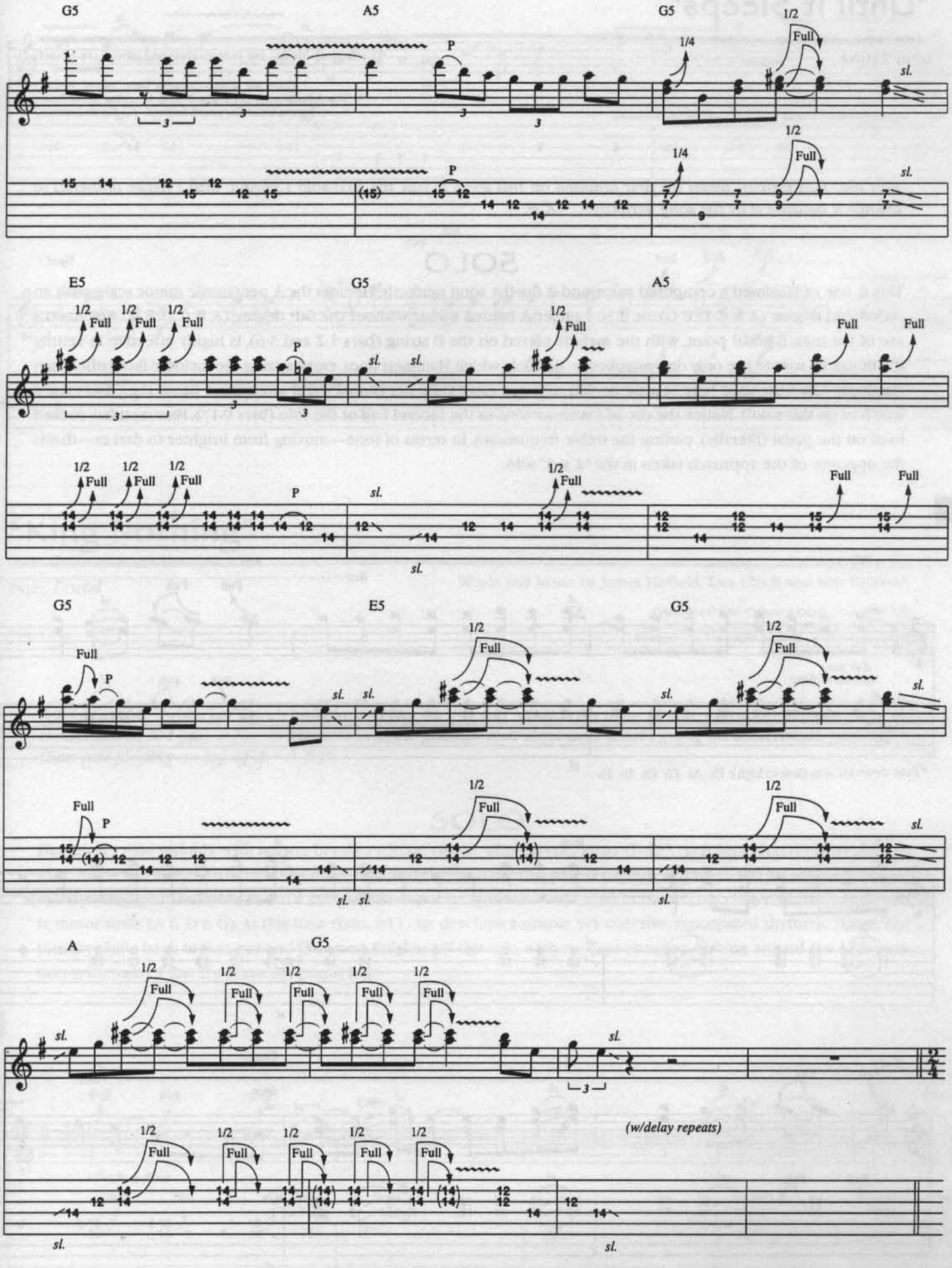
SOLO

This solo, played over a slow groove, is a great way to cut your teeth on the soulful, yet rocking, approach Hammett takes on *Load*. The solo was recorded in two sections: bars 1-16 and bars 17-end, and two guitar settings were used. The opening of the solo has the warm and mild sound of the neck pickup, while the second section was recorded using the brighter, more cutting tone of the bridge pickup.

3:21




G
A5
G
1/2
Full
sl.
E5
G
A5
P
hold bend
G5
E5
A5
G5
E5


G5
A5
G5
1/2
Full
1/4
P
sl.
E5
G5
A5
Full
G5
E5
G5
A
G5
(w/delay repeats)

"Until It Sleeps"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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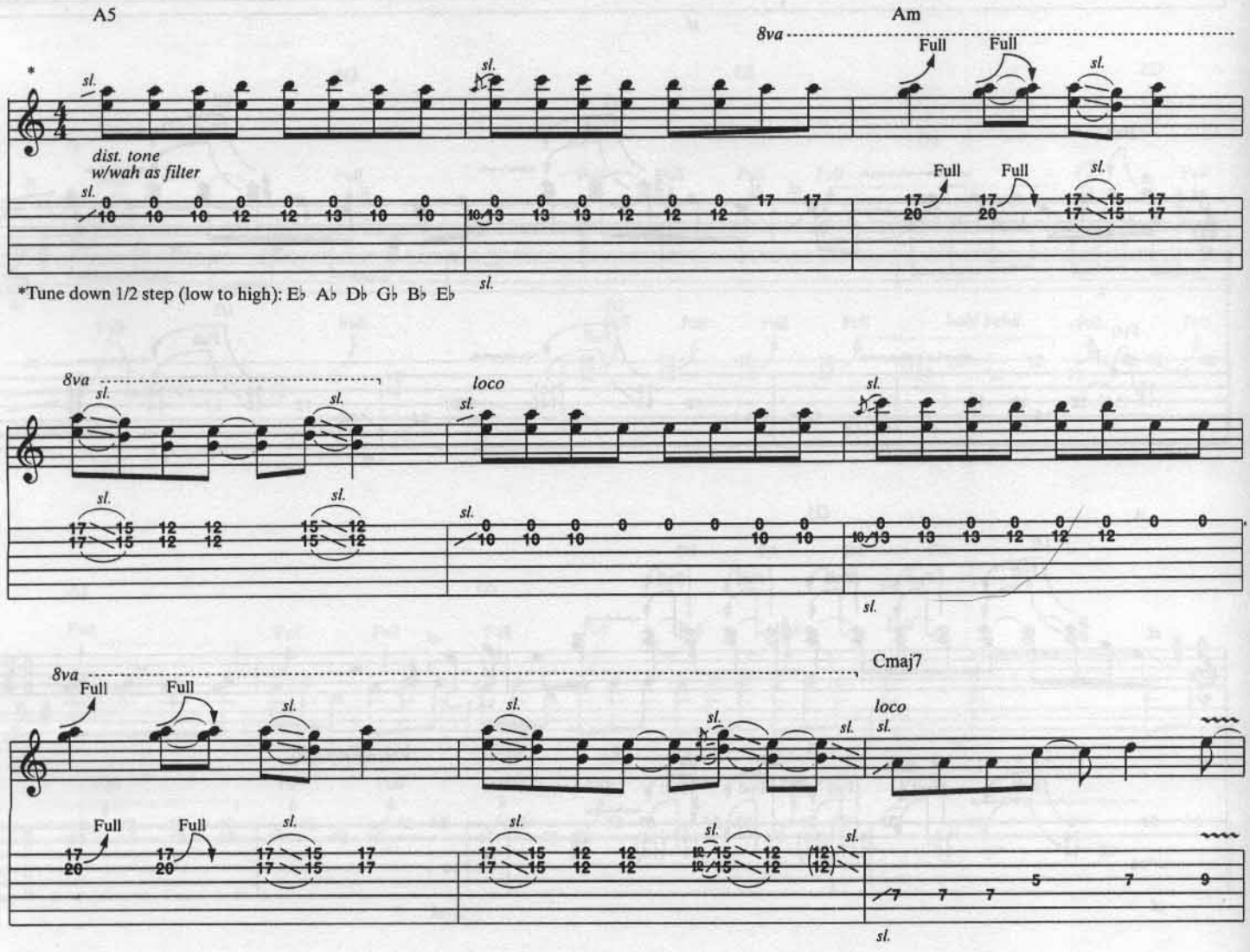
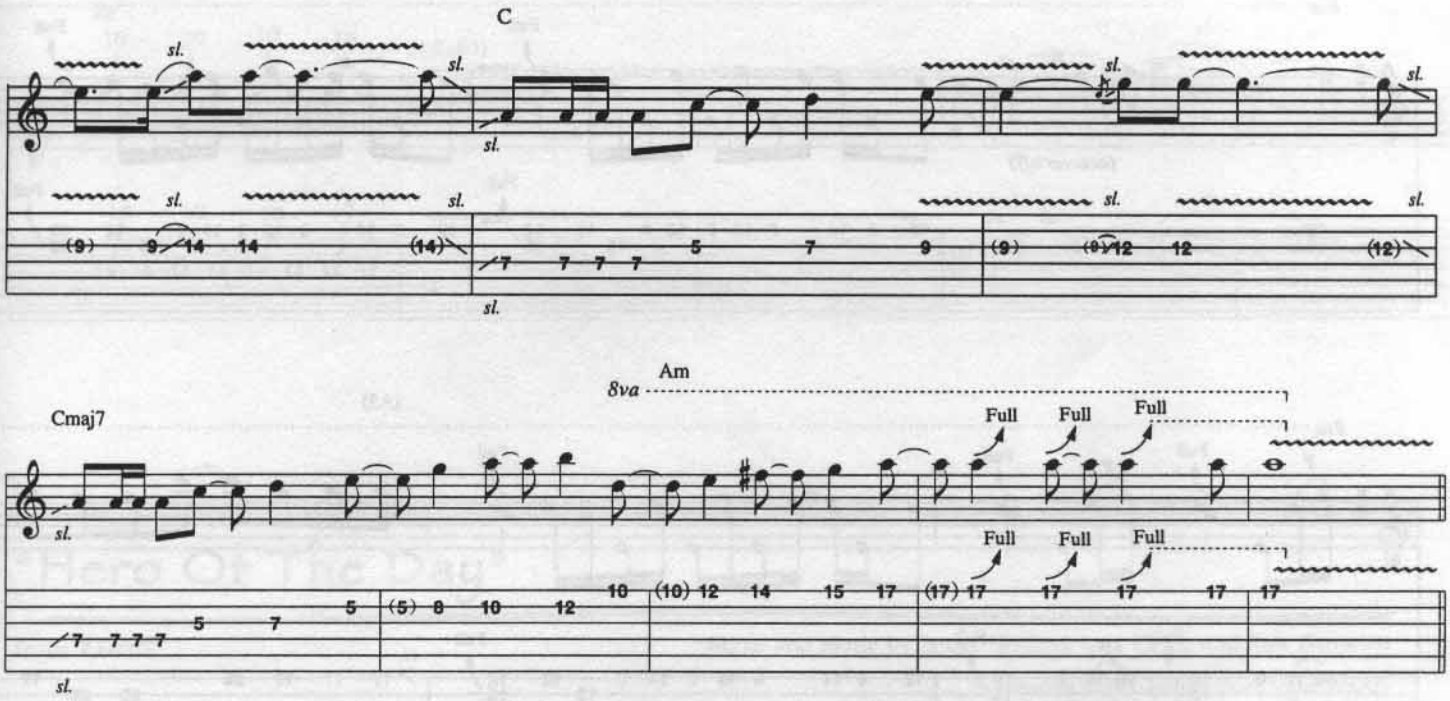
This solo was written when we first jammed on this song. It was the first solo I played, and I never bothered to change it because it fit the song perfectly -K.H.

SOLO

This is one of Hammett's composed solos, and it fits the song perfectly. He uses the A pentatonic minor scale with an added 2nd degree (A B C D E G), or, if you prefer, A natural minor without the 6th degree (A B C D E G). Hammett's use of the high E pedal point, with the melody played on the B string (bars 1-2 and 5-6), is highly effective in setting the mood. Be sure to use only downstrokes on this lick, which Hammett does, emphasizing the melodic line rather than the drone. The wah, used here in a subtle way, acts as a filter. Only, occasional slight sweeps are heard (i.e., don't use a lead foot on this solo!). Notice the use of a warmer tone in the second half of the solo (bars 9-17). Hammett has rocked back on the pedal (literally), cutting the treble frequencies. In terms of tone—moving from brighter to darker—this is the opposite of the approach taken in the "2 x 4" solo.

2:58





"King Nothing"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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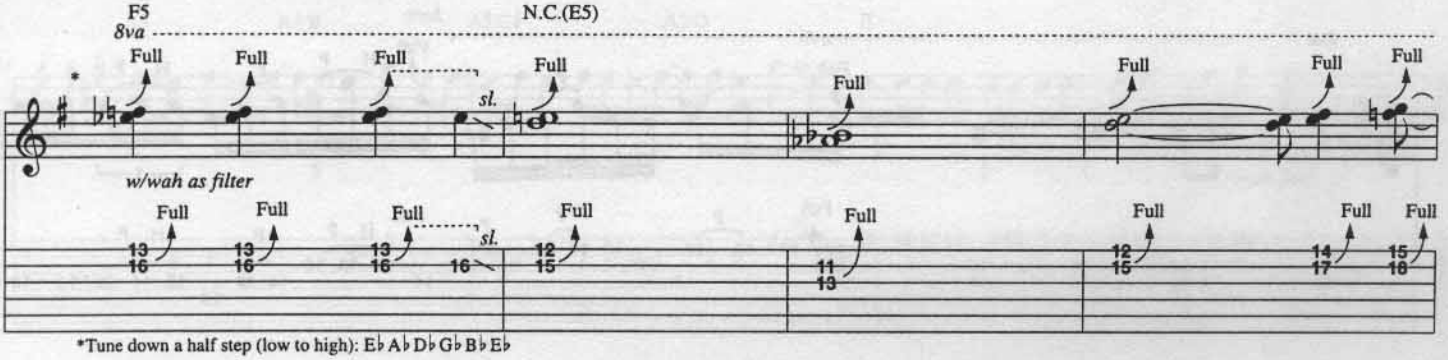
A lot of people think that there's an octave device on this, but it's actually three guitars overdubbed. When the song modulates to A, I play a five or six note melodic passage that showcases what's going on underneath me, rather than just playing on top of it. -K.H.

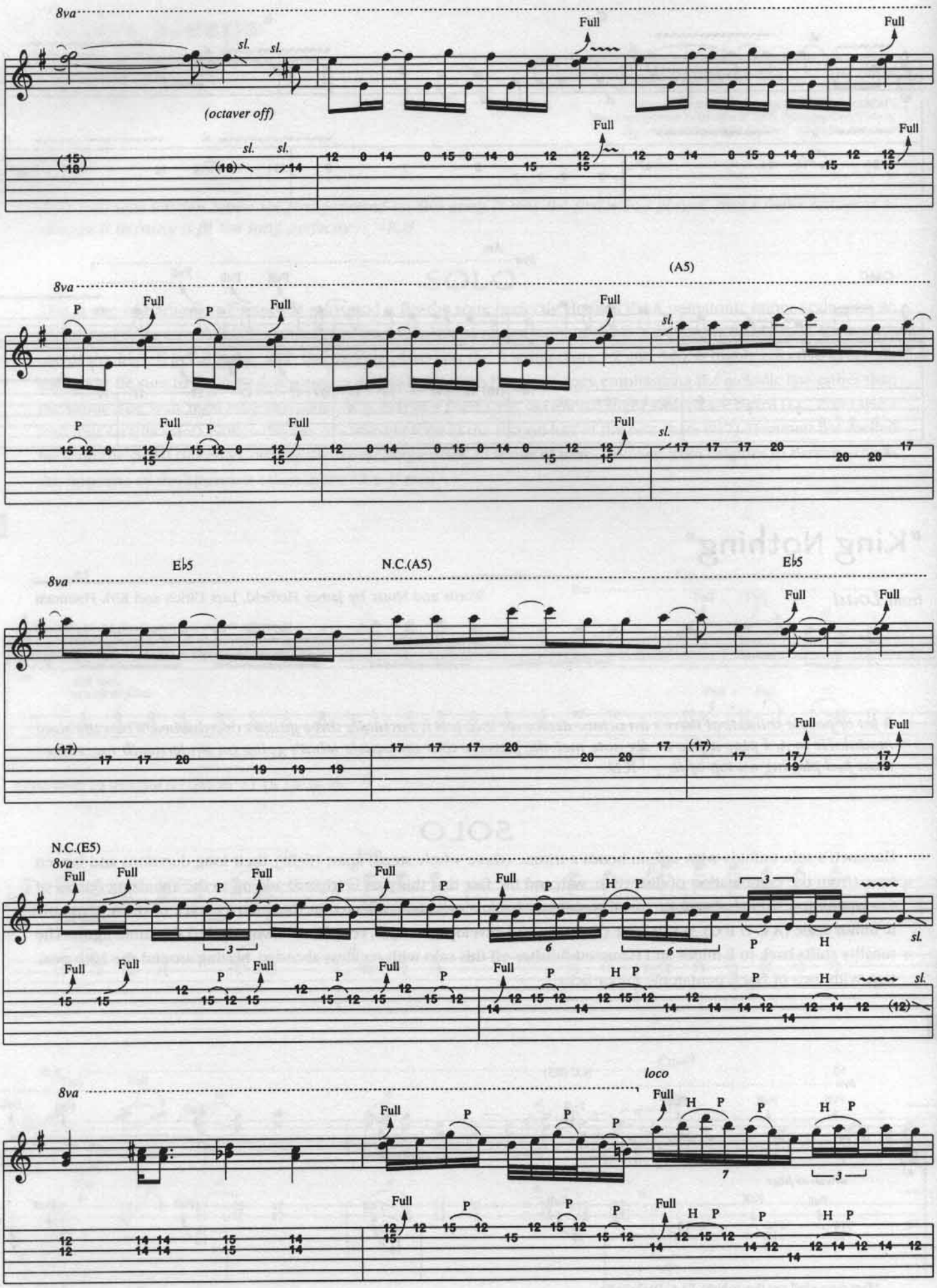
SOLO

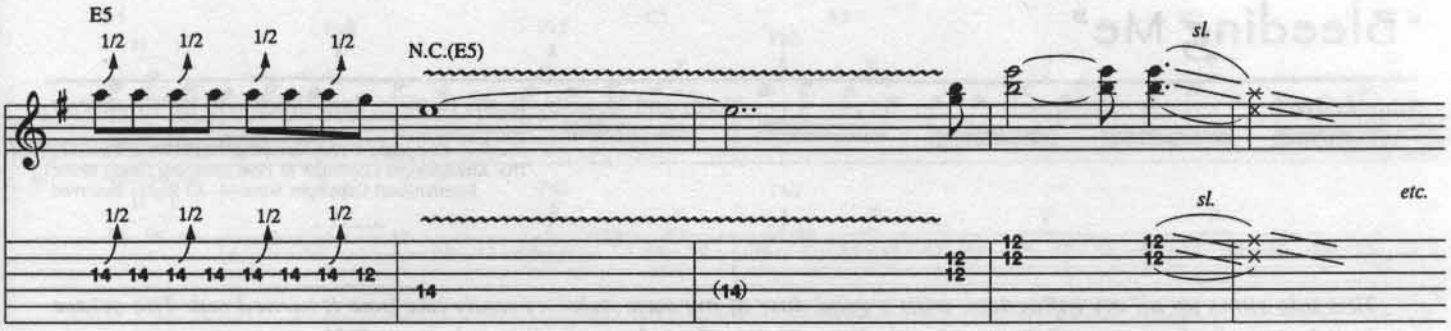
Hammett's solo unfolds with unison bends a tritone (three whole steps) apart (E–B♭), their long durations and brazen tone (from the combination of distortion, wah and the fact that this part is tripled) adding to the agonizing outcry of this opening gesture. In bar 9, the tonality shifts to A minor, which is reflected in Hammett's choice of the A pentatonic minor scale (A C D E G). At this time (bars 9-11) he develops a simple, yet effective, syncopated rhythmic figure. The tonality shifts back to E minor and Hammett finishes off this solo with reckless abandon, blazing around the 12th position with tons of fast E pentatonic minor licks.

2:59



*Tune down a half step (low to high): E♭ A♭ D♭ G♭ B♭ E♭


8va
sl.
(octaver off)
Full
(A5)
P
E♭5
N.C.(A5)
N.C.(E5)
H
loco



"Hero Of The Day"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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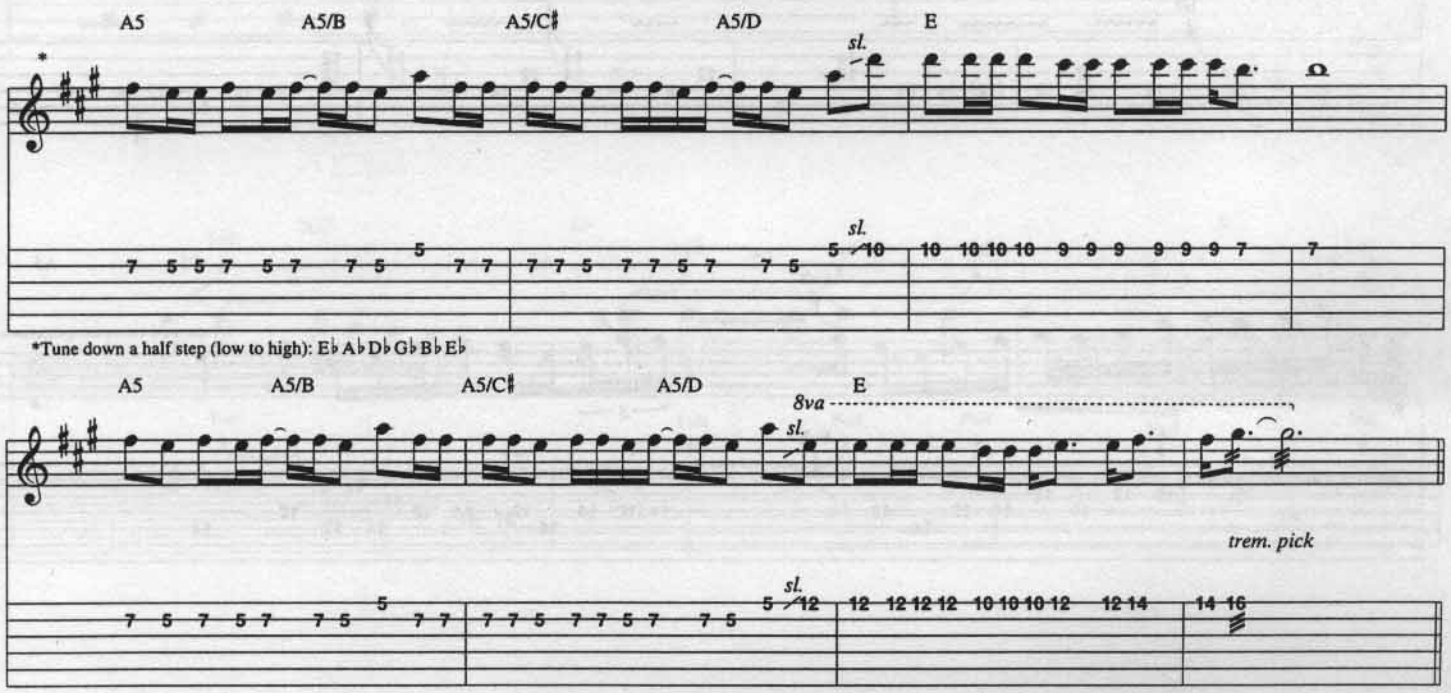
I wanted to play a simplified solo, something that I could actually extend into the verse and complement the vocal melody. -K.H.

SOLO

This is a real stand-out in the *œuvre* of Metallica solos: It's brief, contains no bends, hammer-ons, or pull-offs, and is in a major key. Hammett uses the A major scale here (A B C♯ D E F♯ G♯). Notice how much of this solo is composed of the oscillating figure of E and F♯.

2:40



"Bleeding Me"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield, Lars Ulrich and Kirk Hammett

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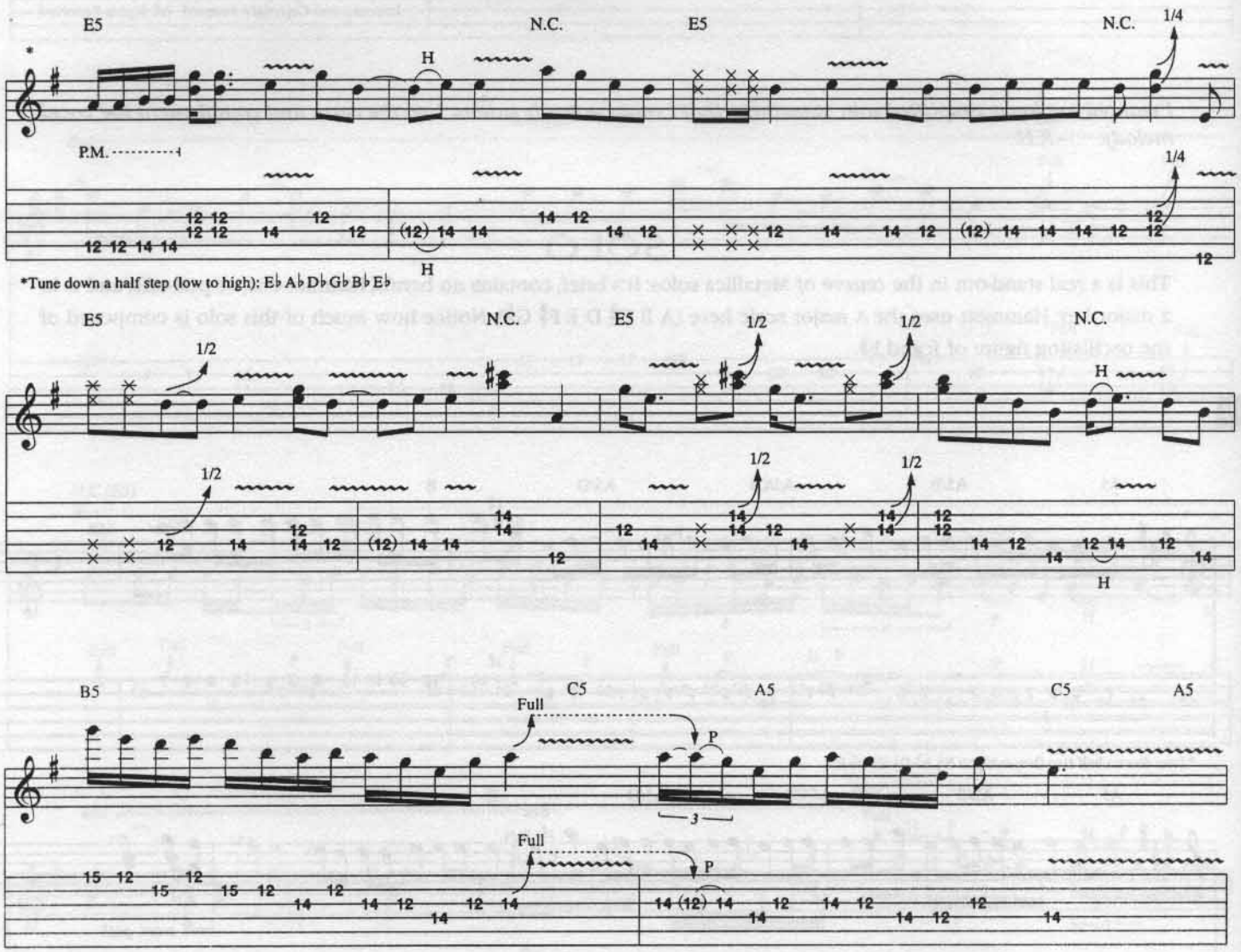
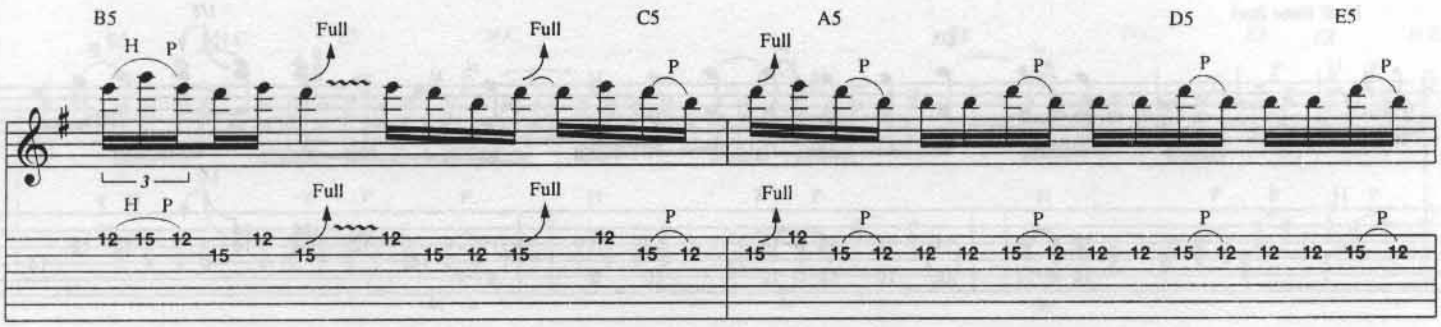
This solo sums up all my influences, with a good dose of my own style ... I really like how it turned out. The octave part is actually from one of the vocal melodies—it gives the solo more dimension. -K.H.

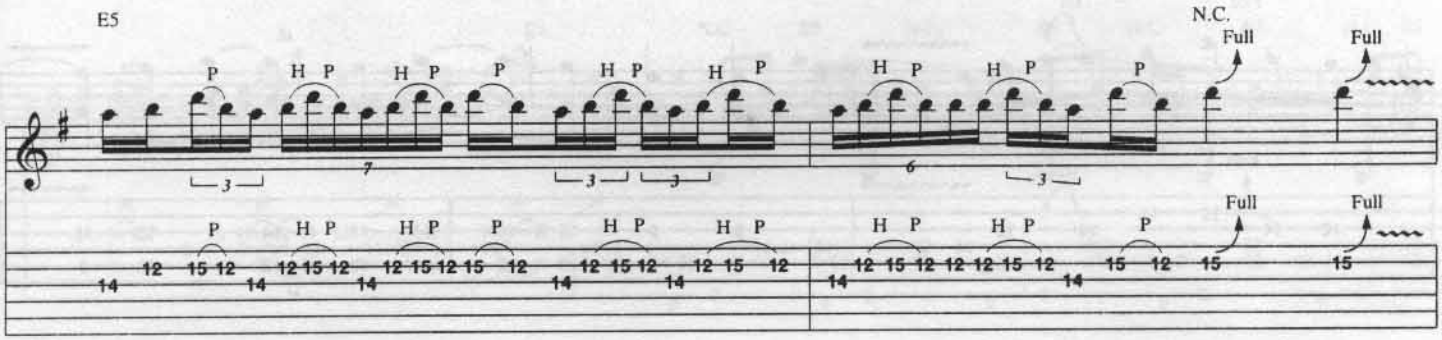
SOLO

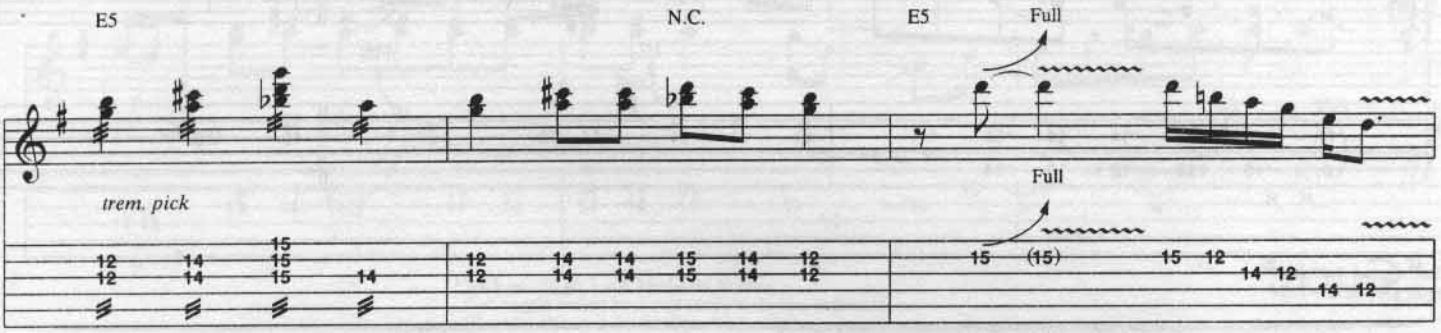
Unlike many other E minor solos that Hammett has recorded, this one stays firmly rooted in 12th position, at least until the appearance of the octave licks in bar 21. Trace as many of the licks in this solo as you can to the licks presented in "The Signature Licks of Kirk Hammett" section, comparing and contrasting their similarities and differences.

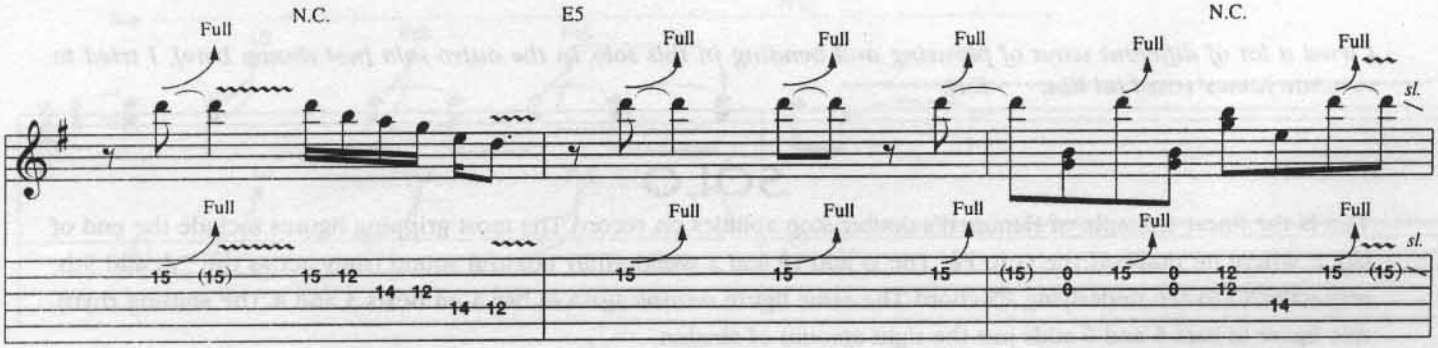
6:07

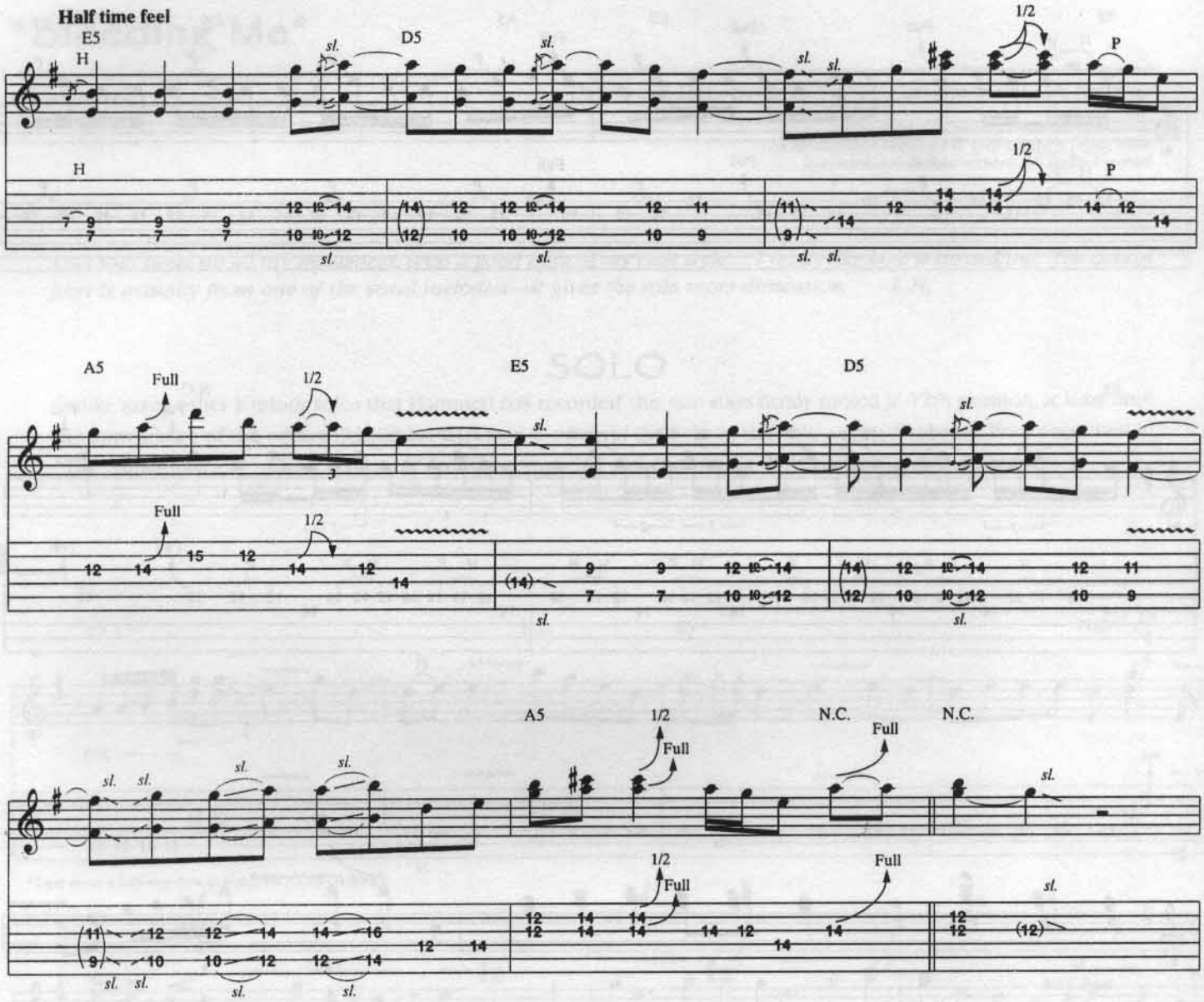



B5
C5
A5
D5
E5
H P
Full
P
3


E5
N.C.
Full
P
H P
3
7
6


E5
N.C.
E5
Full
trem. pick


N.C.
E5
N.C.
Full
sl.



"Cure"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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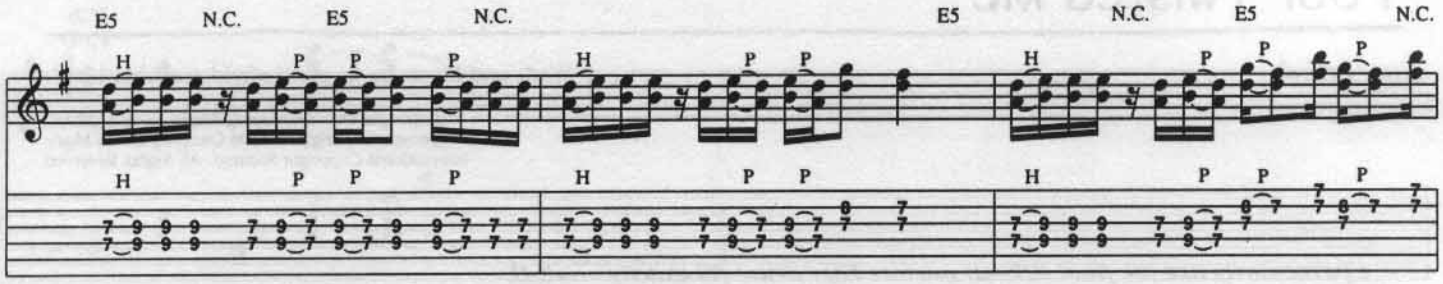
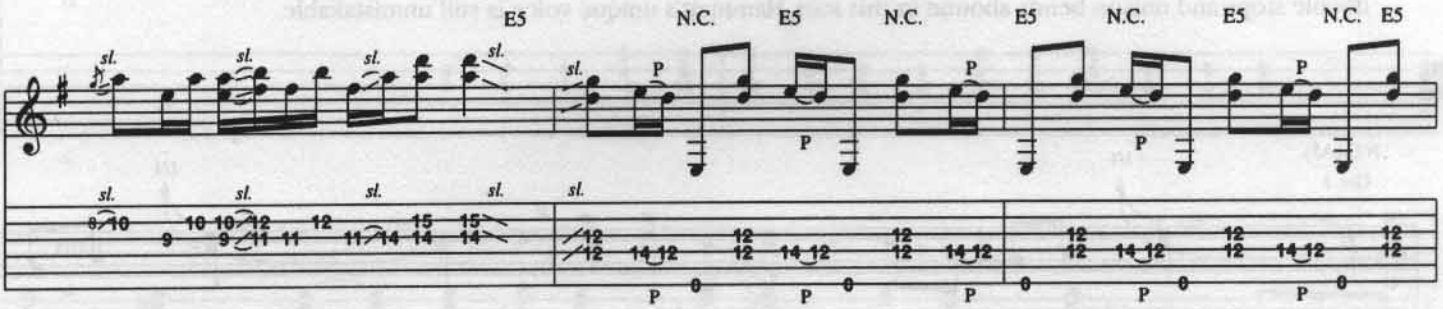
I tried a lot of different ways of phrasing and bending in this solo. In the outro solo [not shown here], I tried to emulate James' vocal ad libs. -K.H.

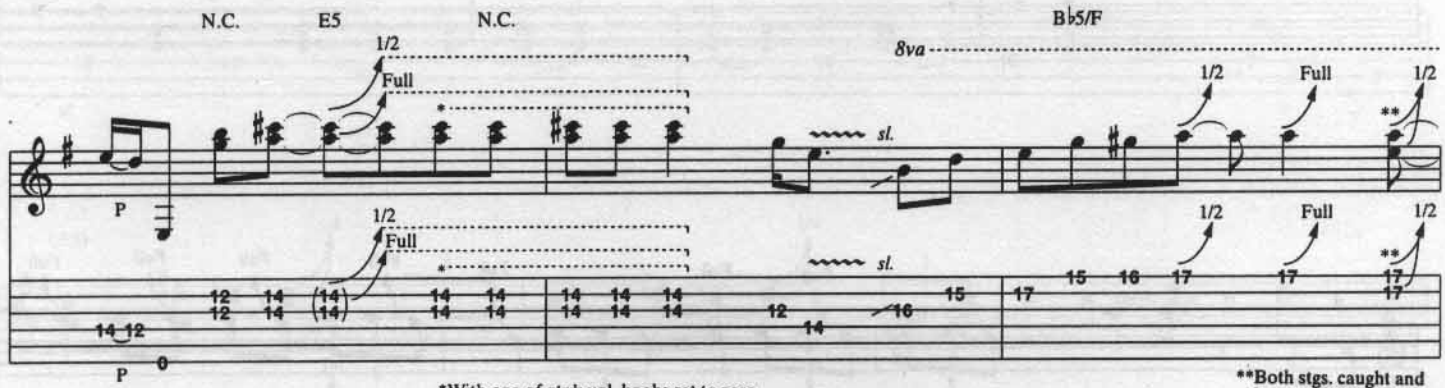
SOLO

This is the finest example of Hammett's double-stop abilities on record. The most gripping figures include the end of bar 2, where he pulls off the G to F♯. The D and F♯ add a wonderfully colorful sound (they act as the 7th and 9th, respectively) to the underlying E5 chord. The same figure returns again in bar 3 on beats 3 and 4. The shifting rhythmic figure in bars 5 and 6 adds just the right amount of tension.

2:34

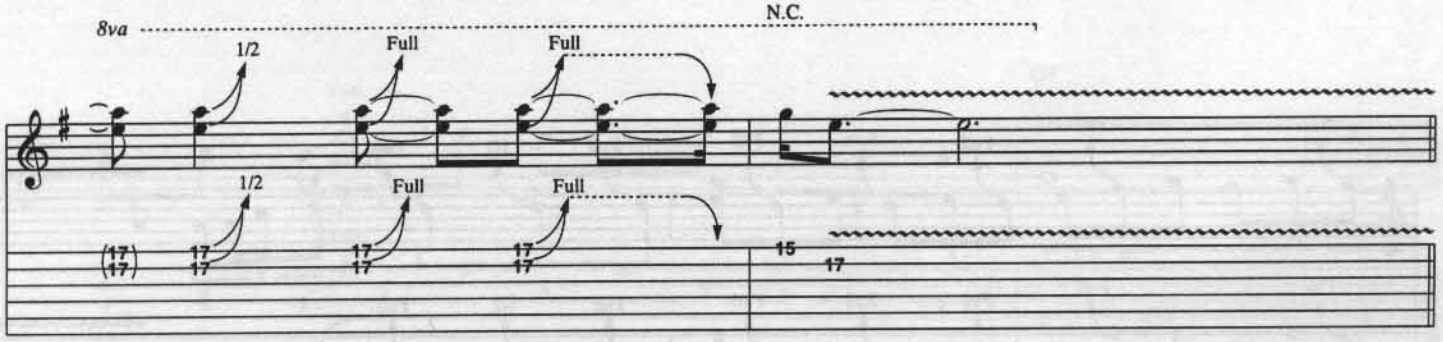






*With one of gtr.'s vol. knobs set to zero, flick toggle switch back and forth in rhythm indicated. (Rhythm shown is for "on" position only.)

**Both stgs. caught and bent w/L.H. ring finger



"Poor Twisted Me"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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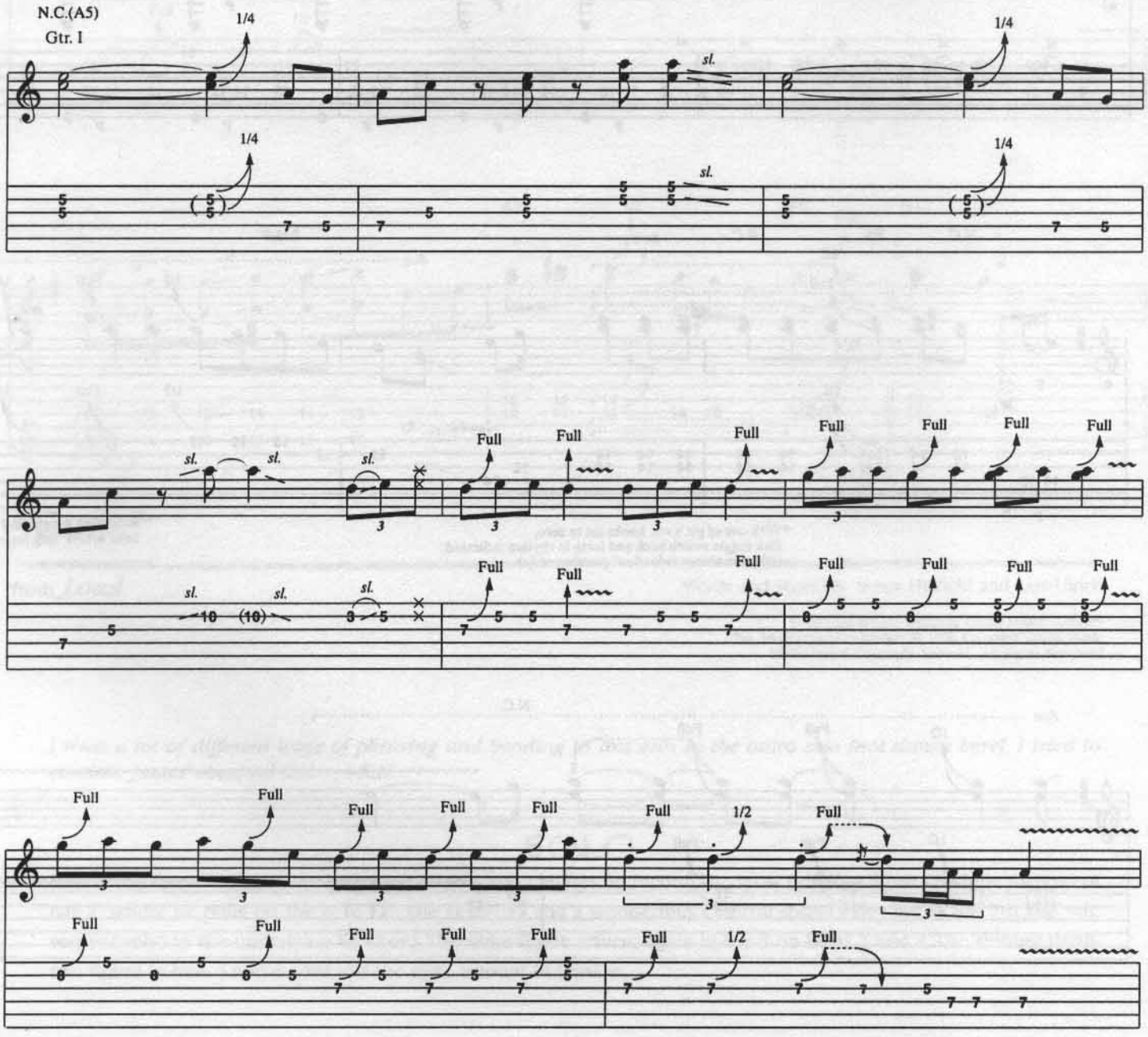
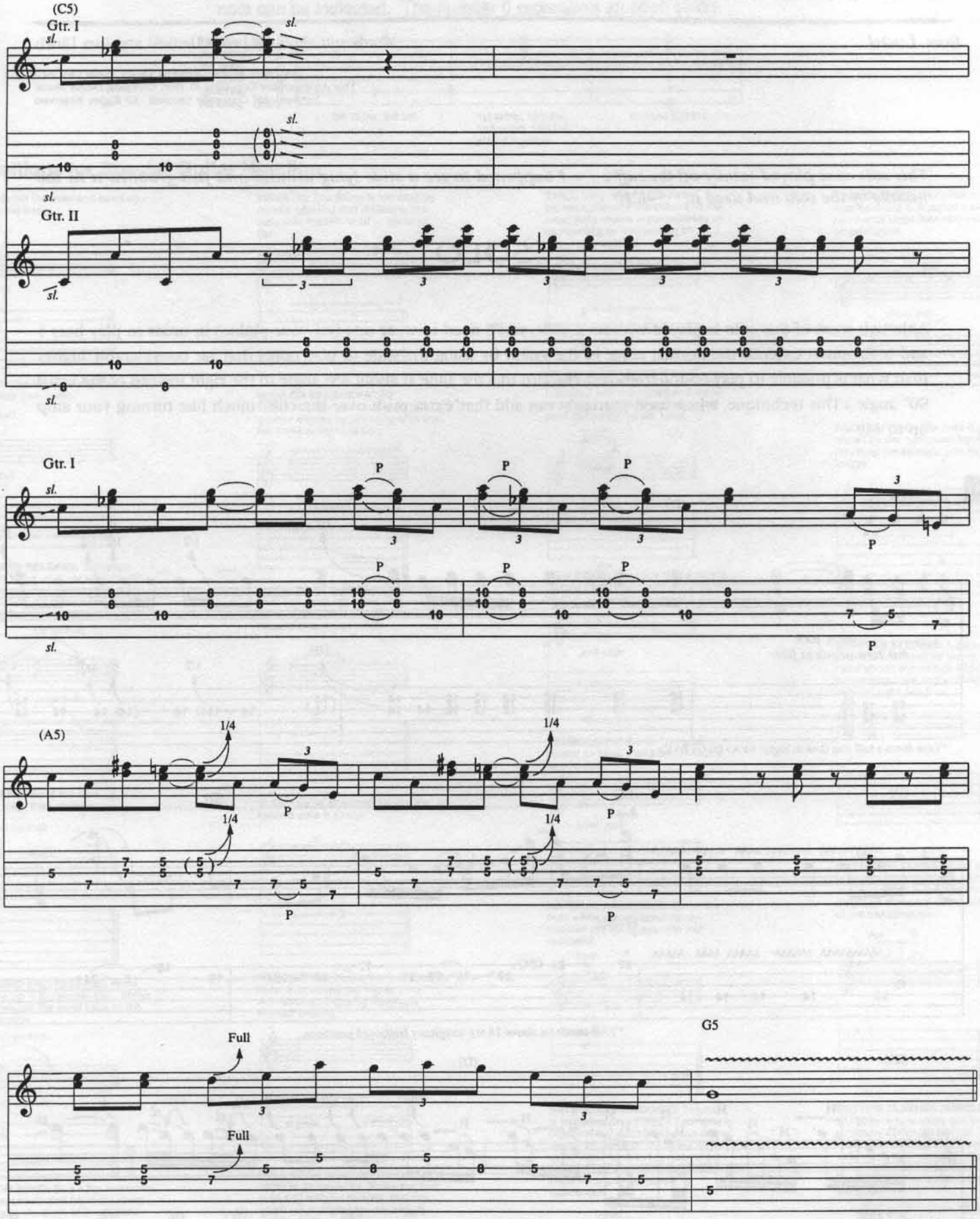
I particularly like the final lick—it mirrors Lars' drum fill exactly. -K.H.

SOLO

This is about as close to rockabilly as Hammett will probably get on a Metallica record. Even though Chuck Berry-style double stops and unison bends abound in this solo, Hammett's unique voice is still unmistakable.

2:38

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"The Outlaw Torn"

from *Load*

Words and Music by James Hetfield and Lars Ulrich

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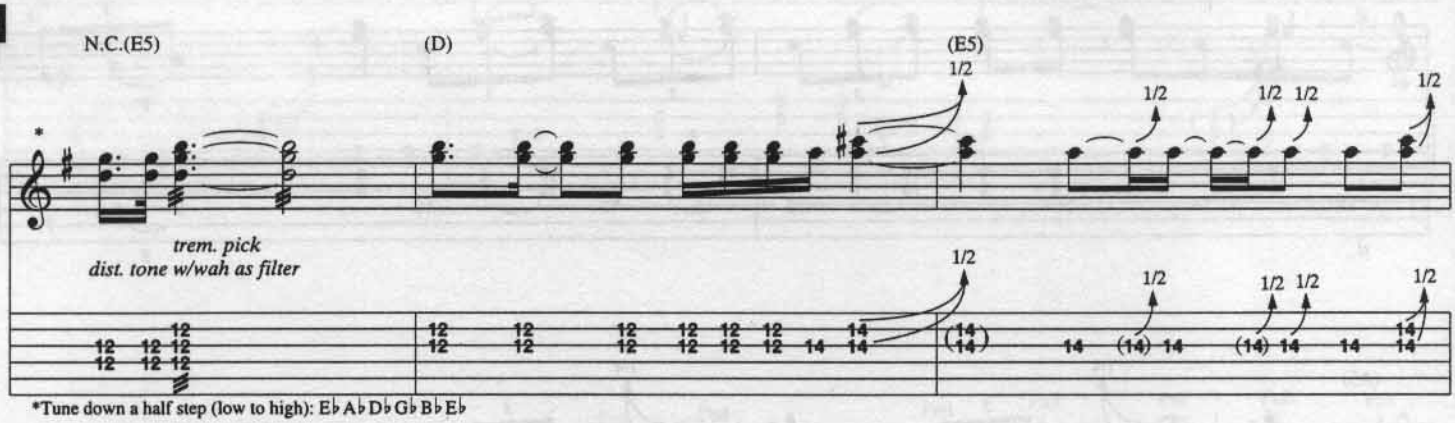
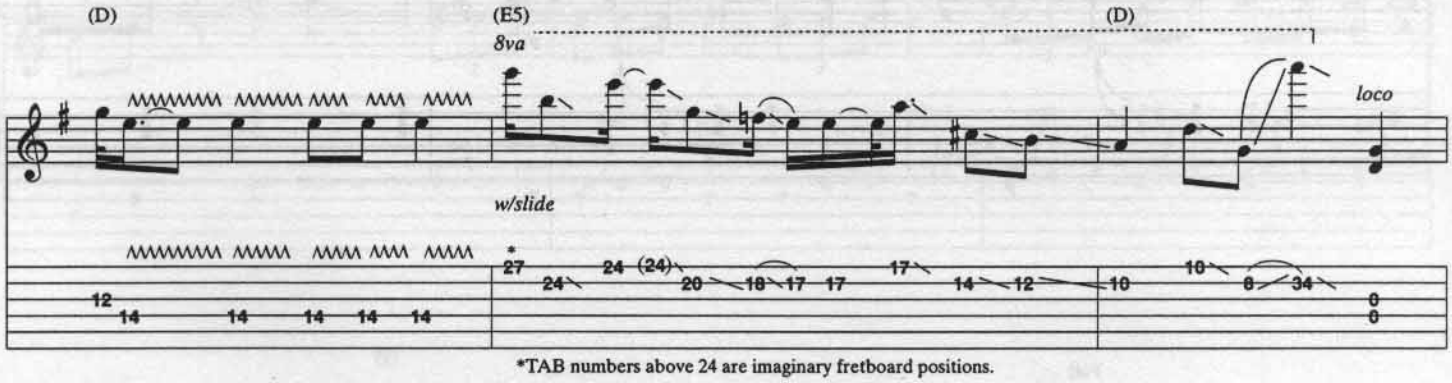
This solo was played totally off-the-cuff . . . I happened to see a slide lying around and just grabbed it in the middle of the solo and used it! -K.H.

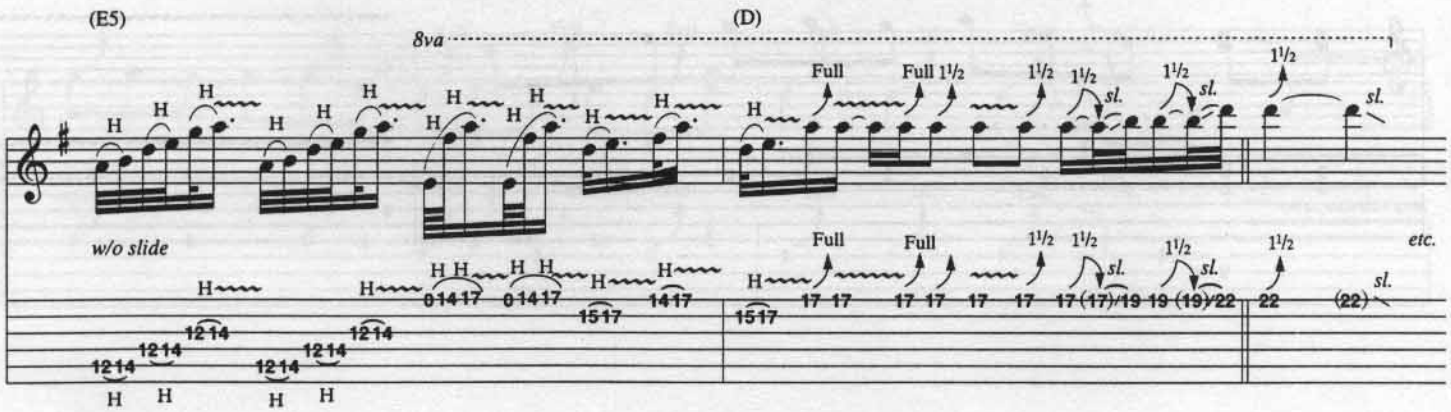
SOLO

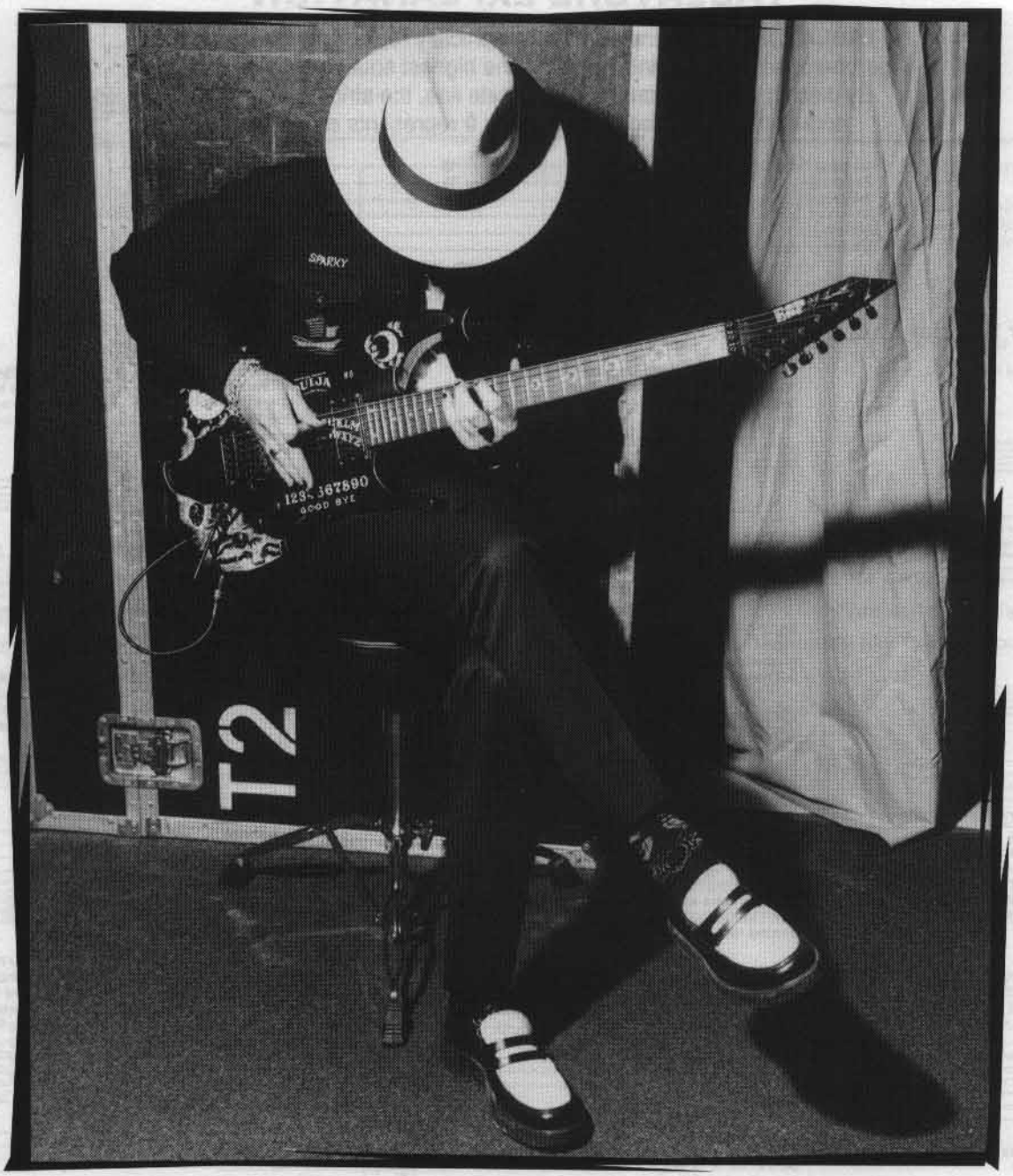
Although most of this solo is played without a slide, you'll need to wear one (on your pinkie) in order to play bars 5 and 6. Hammett extends the normal range of the guitar by using the slide to play notes that are considerably higher than what is possible to play on the fretboard. (he also tilts the slide at about 45° angle to the right instead of the usual 90° angle.) This technique, when used sparingly, can add that"extra push over the cliff," much like turning your amp up to 11.

6:26







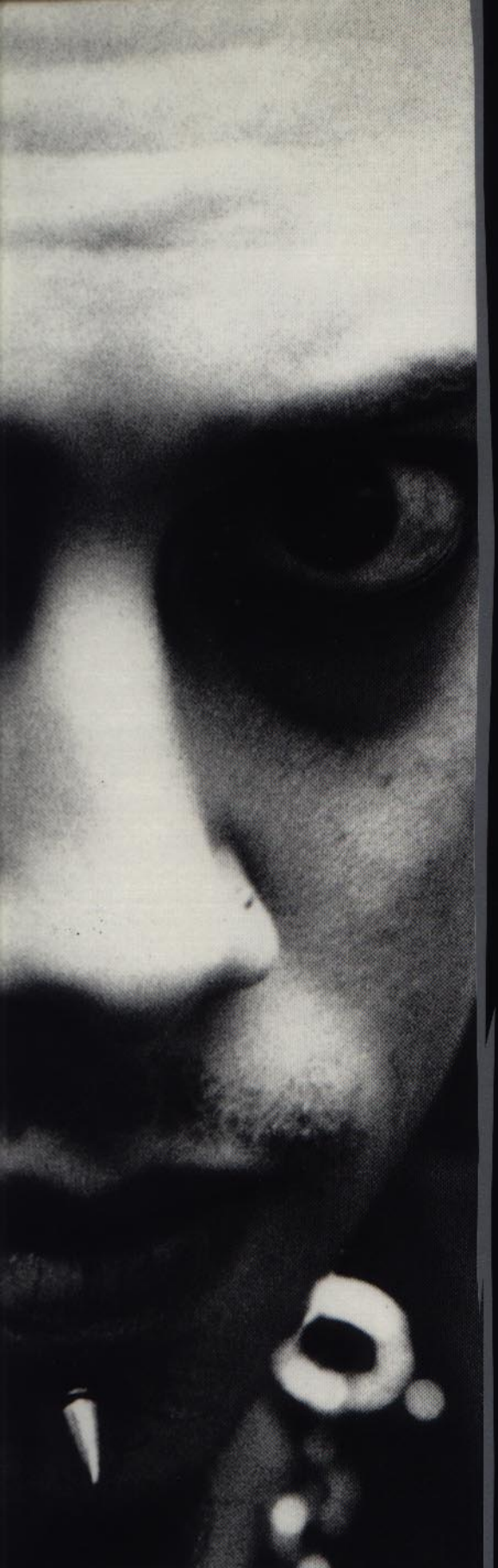


I think that I have come full circle musically, so to speak, with the creation of this book.

When I was 15 years old, I bought a book called *Improvising Rock Guitar.* I wasn't much of a guitar player back then, and the only reason I bought it was because I liked the Jim Marshall photograph of Hendrix on the cover. I remember being amazed by how Jimi was playing the guitar without even looking at the neck! I spent countless hours poring over the various chapters of that book. I took it everywhere with me, thinking that the more time I spent with it the more understandable everything would suddenly become. Eventually, I learned as much as I wanted to learn from it; but more importantly, I learned that books like these can be amazing learning tools. I realized that I was taking information from a book and turning it into music! From that point on, I have used instructional books, throughout my entire playing career, to help me understand and comprehend the process of technique. I've applied this to form a "springboard" into other directions and styles of playing, as these books are a good source for inspiration and musical ideas.

So finally, I have my own book! It will guide you through an in-depth analysis of my own playing style, which is largely made up of my own assimilation of information gathered. I hope you will use this book as a "springboard" into other styles and avenues of playing. But I think it is also important for you to understand that playing these pieces with vitality and emotional content does not come strictly from the page—it comes from you, the player. . . .

Kirk Hammett
February 7, 1997



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